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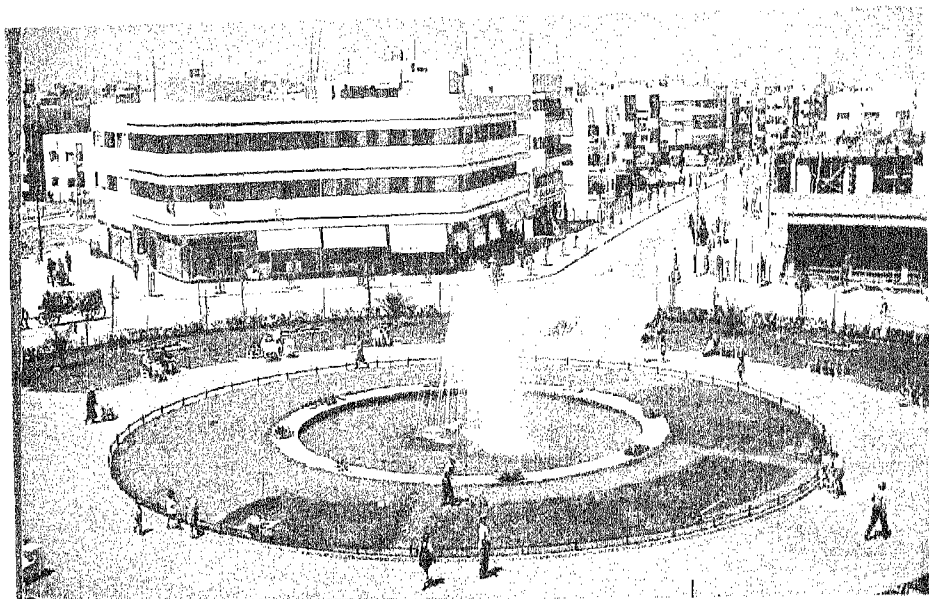
NO EASE IN ZION



*“Woe to them that are at ease in Zion,  
and trust in the mountain of Samaria.”*

AMOS



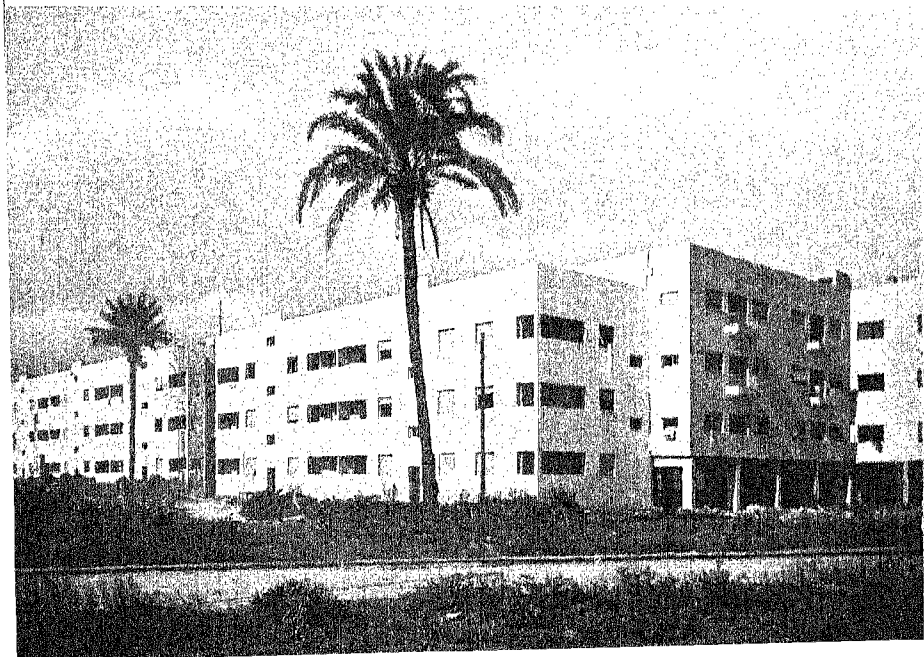


*Above: Tel Aviv: Street Scene*

PLATE I

*Below: Tel Aviv: Workers' Co-operative Flats*

[Frontispiece]



by T. R. FEIWEL

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NO EASE  
IN  
ZION

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## PREFACE

THE long, twisting history of that strange people, the Jews, has an improbable quality about it. The present last stage, perhaps a culminating one, perhaps not, witnessing at once the dissolution and persecution of the Jews and a revival of Jewish nationalism in Zionism, has been as unexpected as any. In the modern flood of nationalism Zionism, the subject of this study, is unique in representing the nationalist revival among a people, or community, which had almost vanished and most of whose members had ceased to regard themselves as belonging to it. The great majority of Jews are completely involved in every economic and political conflict of their host-countries. As an active political movement Zionism has never had more than minority support from the Jews, though to-day every Jewish community in the world has its Zionist nucleus. Yet Zionism as a world movement has tenaciously endured through the convulsions of the last forty years. Beyond its outer form of vague Jewish charity efforts it has always possessed its vanguard of determined young Jews, mostly from Russia and Poland, nationally conscious at fever heat and ready for any sacrifice. The swift appearance of Jewish Palestine with its near to half-million people, a new unit of Jewish civilization and a new political factor in the Eastern Mediterranean, is a tribute to the courage and creative power of this Jewish revival.

The present study is intended as an objective account of

this Jewish national revival and its achievements and fate in Palestine.

And, while the writer is setting out to be objective, bomb explosions and shots are resounding in the cities and villages of Palestine. New outbreaks of racial violence in Palestine, coinciding with a sudden Italian turn towards anti-Semitism, may denote--what? A new fascist drive, this time towards Palestine and the Middle East? It is hard to be a Jew to-day, in Palestine as in other countries, just as it is hard to be a Spaniard, Chinese, Abyssinian or Arab. At certain points in this study the writer has severely criticized Zionist policy in Palestine during the past ten years, above all the fatal failure to strive for better Jewish-Arab relations (a failure particularly pronounced on the part of the nationalist Jewish labour movement); even though he has endeavoured to show the very human reasons for such failure. But such criticism is a matter of the past. The rise of Mussolini, with Hitler looming behind him, the challenge to British and French rule--in spite of everything the rule of Western democracies--in the Middle East, the sweeping rise of fascist ideology among the half-educated new Arab youth, have created an entirely new situation.

The small Jewish community in Palestine, because--behind all its nationalism--it is free, democratic, and Jewish, is to-day as much at bay against its fascist as against its Arab enemies: the Palestine issue is no longer local.

Jewish Palestine was founded a generation ago by inspired intellectuals and idealists. To-day, it presents the familiar picture of small-scale patriotism, youth marching and drilling . . . violence and enmity outside. Yet even to-day this is only one side of the picture. Jewish Palestine was built by Jewish refugees, yet it is to the honour of the Jewish national leaders that, far transcending refugee

psychology, they tried to build up, particularly through chains of collectives and co-operatives which form the basis of Jewish Palestine, a society consciously aiming at free co-operation and comradeship, at the highest social ideals.

History moves fast ; a certain stage of Jewish social striving in Palestine is to-day already past. Adjustments, painful adjustments, have to be made. Because of its nationalist tinge, Jewish Palestine has in the past been particularly attacked by writers on the Left. But these attacks, grotesquely out of date already, must be adjusted, too, and it is the aim of this study to show that the Jewish effort in Palestine, past and present, is one of which all Jews, in the present plight of their people, may be proud.

T. R. F.

*July, 1938.*





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*(Acknowledgment is due to The American Colony Stores of Jerusalem for the photographs of the Arab Higher Committee and the Opening of Transjordan ; to Orushkes of Jerusalem for that of the Peel Commission ; to Robichek of Jerusalem for the photographs of the Arab woman and the Arabs in Tiberias ; to the Orient Press Photo Company of Tel Aviv for that of the Arab Nationalists in café ; and, finally, to the Palestine Foundation Fund of Jerusalem for all the remaining photographs.)*

## *Prologue*

### JOURNEY THROUGH PALESTINE

A YEAR ago, in the spring of 1937 (that is, in almost prehistoric days—the Basques were still holding out in Bilbao; the Japanese had not yet attacked Shanghai; it was a whole year before Hitler's invasion of Vienna), I travelled by car from Jerusalem to Lower Galilee to witness the founding of a new Zionist settlement.

Travelling in Palestine, one is at once made aware of the pronounced influence of the country upon its people. It is a country half-way between the desert and the Mediterranean, a narrow strip of a country, isolated and small, always too small: that is why its human life and its eternal conflicts seem raised to an unnatural, shrill pitch.

Leaving Jerusalem, one travels through the Crusaders' country, passing the Christian Arab villages of Judea, several of them built in the shadow of silent, walled-up monasteries, where the spirit of the Middle Ages is preserved to this day. The hill-sides are well cultivated; the whole scene is Mediterranean, characterized by the slow, careful culture of the olive trees growing on the terraces and tended as well as can be done by patient, traditional hard toil by hand on ungrateful and stony soil.

The scattered hill country of the old kingdom of Israel is to-day traversed in less than an hour's motoring. The road curves and climbs among a maze of rounded hills, continually shifting and opening out, revealing narrow valleys covered with thin carpets of green young wheat, each valley isolated from its neighbour, a shut-off world to itself. This is the small, anarchic world of the Biblical

villages and valleys. Here, the older Hebrew prophets preached ; one can gather the intensity of the megalomania with which, from the villages of their fourth-rate little kingdom, they preached to the world.

Nablus, the present capital of Samaria, a small Arab moneylenders' and landlords' town, lies quite isolated in a hollow between grim hills shutting out its view of the world, on the site of the Roman city, Flavia Neapolis, which again was built on the site of ancient Shechem, capital of the Israelites.

Something of the ominous, pervading character of the landscape still remains. In spite of road and railway the world is still shut out. Yet in this isolation the flame of Arab nationalism, of hatred for Zionists and British, still burns with a fierceness unique even in Palestine. Even its own divisions are extreme. Underneath the nationalist fascist-minded youth movement are the sullen fellahen, rigorously held down.

Beyond Nablus, the landscape changes completely. After thirty minutes' drive a glimpse of the silvery Mediterranean is caught from the watershed between Galilee and Samaria. Down in the plain of Armageddon one travels between striking, modern Zionist settlements. A fresh sea breeze blows across the fields. Haifa is only twenty miles away.

Ein Harod, the largest Zionist communal settlement, containing one thousand people, Jewish refugees from Europe now turned Jewish nationalists, stands at the foot of Mount Gilboa. Its ultra-modern white buildings seem like a scene from a Soviet Russian film, suddenly transplanted to Palestine. The defensive compactness of the buildings, facing the outside world, mirrors the strange isolationism of the members of the commune. Fifteen years ago, as young Russian immigrants, they set the tone for all Jewish Palestine. To-day they have been swamped by the noisy capitalist growth of Tel Aviv and Haifa, but they cannot realize this. The Nemesis of Arab enmity threatens from surrounding wretched Arab villages. But Ein Harod has introduced new methods of warfare into this marauders'

country. Each night its powerful searchlight plays over the surrounding landscape, lighting up orchards, mountain slopes, Arab houses, a silent symbol of a struggle not evaded, but not ended either.

Twelve miles beyond Ein Harod is Beisan, one of the poorest Arab towns in Palestine. In the ancient mound beside the town, where British archaeologists are excavating, eleven separate levels of ancient civilization have already been found. But to-day the streets of Beisan are filthy. Its Arab population, shrunk to a few thousand, has a wild and at the same time degenerate look. Much of it consists of nomad Beduin turned casual labourers or squatters, the lowest class in Arab Palestine. Only the children swarm and swarm in the street, and, in imitation of their elders, give us dark looks, and a stone or two is thrown at the car. Nationalism has come even to Beisan.

A few miles north of Beisan, in the wild, primitive emptiness of the Jordan valley, the new Jewish commune, Beth Yosef, had been provisionally established in one day, with that Palestine Jewish efficiency which is rather American ; set up from scientifically prepared and numbered segments of huts, roofing, fencing, etc., brought by a fleet of trucks early in the morning. Three hundred men and women from neighbouring settlements had assembled for the work. Young Jews in British uniforms walked about rather self-consciously with rifles. The skeleton settlement, almost completed, was really only a small wooden fort, recalling the Wild West of a hundred years ago, consisting of a few wooden army huts, and a wooden tower fitted with a searchlight, enclosed by a double wooden stockade, filled with rubble and bullet proof ; the whole surrounded by a strong barbed-wire fence. The Jews had already become expert in the technique of putting up such a fort in one day. Tractors had cleared the ground and pulled the tower upright. Electricity had already been laid on from the main cable not far away, and the searchlight would already light up the surroundings this coming night.

In spite of this modern technique, there was something





*Part One*

EUROPE AND THE JEWS



## CHAPTER I

### PREAMBLE

**T**HE first history of the Jews in Palestine is generally regarded as having come to an end in A.D. 143, when the last Jewish rebellion against Rome, that of Bar Kochba, was crushed and the remnants of Jewish Palestine annihilated.

The new connection of the Jews with Palestine is usually said to have begun in about 1880, when the first Jewish colonies in Palestine were founded and early Zionist pioneers entered the country.)

But the mere fact that one thousand seven hundred years separate the two histories shows that such bald statement simply leaves everything that is important out of account.

Who, in any case, are the modern Jews? Are they a race?

Hitler says so, but even this need be no reason for accepting the view. For years the most earnest and industrious scholars have delved into the subject, only to find the Jews of hopelessly mixed race. Any representative gathering of modern Jews immediately reveals Semitic, Mongol, Slav, Latin or Germanic racial features. In fact, the difficulties in defining a constant historical Jewish race are insuperable, because a racial mixing and sifting process preceded and accompanied even the first appearance of the people, or groups of peoples, variously known as Hebrews, Israelites, Jews.

Yet, race or no race, it is impossible not to regard the Jews of to-day, in spite of all divergences, at least as a psychological unit—if only because of the loose but world-wide feeling that they are such a unit, and the world-wide

prejudice aroused (however artificially) against them. The modern problem of anti-Semitism is both uncanny in the awful catastrophe it has brought not only to the Jewish minority but to millions of non-Jews, and frightening in the historical perspective it opens out. Are we so near to the Middle Ages? The close copy of medieval anti-Jewish measures in modern Central Europe has something of the fantastic about it, especially as feelings have been roused not only against full Jews, but against half, even quarter Jews. And the question arises: who are the Jews? Who are these people? Did they really come from Palestine, and are the Jews of London and New York and Johannesburg and Moscow the descendants of those Israelites of whom the Bible tells?

Obviously—they cannot be. But Jewish history, ancient or modern, has only to-day really been studied or rather begun to be studied in a social-political rather than a religious-superstitious sense. It is still hardly known, surrounded by misconceptions. There is little need to mention gross exaggerations and tragic slanders about the Jewish role in modern society. But even older Jewish history is similarly misunderstood. H. L. Mencken, for instance, can write:

‘The same Jews, from time immemorial, have been the chief dreamers of the human race, and beyond all comparison its greatest poets. It was the Jews who wrote the magnificent poems called the Psalms, the Song of Solomon, and the Books of Job and Ruth; it was Jews who gave us the Beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount, the incomparable ballad of the Christ Child and the twelfth of Romans. I incline to believe that the scene recounted in John 5-11 is the most poignant drama ever written in the world, as the Song of Solomon is unquestionably the most moving love song, and the Twenty-third Psalm the greatest of hymns. All these transcendent riches Christianity inherits from a little tribe of sedentary Beduins, so obscure and unimportant that secular history scarcely knows them. No heritage of modern man is richer, and none has made a more brilliant mark upon human thought, not even the legacy of the Greeks.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dark, *The Jew To-day*, 1933.

But—leaving the New Testament aside – the great Hebrew literature Mr. Mencken mentions, the Psalms, Ruth, the Song of Songs, Job, dates from the fourth-second centuries B.C., long after the Babylonian captivity, when Semitic and Greek civilizations were mingling in a renaissance of the Middle East, and when the Jews were already a numerous, urbanised, largely Greek-speaking trading people, spread right across the Middle East, highly civilized and literate, and rivalling the Greeks in the control of Mediterranean trade. Sedentary Beduin? Mr. Mencken is out by seven hundred years.

Yet his is only the generally accepted misconception. The entire history of the Jews is no less obscured by religious mysticism and tradition than modern Jewish history by subsidized hatred and prejudice. The theme of this book is the contemporary Jewish effort in Palestine—the Zionist experiment. Yet can the modern Jewish question, and Zionism, be understood in all their complexities if the historical antecedents are left obscure? In the opinion of the writer, they cannot. Not because either Zionism or its background of anti-Semitism is to be regarded as the culmination of Jewish history, but to understand them it is vital to give an *intelligible account* of the arrival of the Jews – a people in ancient history—in Europe, and this the writer has therefore tried to give in the following chapters.

The general lines of this analysis have not seemed very difficult to the writer : the evidence seems readily available—and clear.

## CHAPTER II

### HEBREW PROPHEETS

**T**HE first phase is that of the early Hebrews in Palestine.

As said, the earliest history of the Hebrews is obscure, but this is not important. What is reasonably sure is the following: (nomadic tribes called Hebrews first appeared definitely in Palestine about 1200 B.C., during a period when the Egyptian and Babylonian Empires had decayed and waves of wandering populations and warrior nomads were moving like a shifting pattern across the entire Middle East.) In Palestine, not only Semitic tribes from the desert but Aegean and Cretan invaders from the sea and also Hittites and Aryans from the north all drifted into the country, massacring and enslaving its ancient Canaanite population and merging with it to form new historical nations. Two of these emergent national entities deserve mention: the Philistines, a seafaring people living in trading cities in the fertile coastal plain of Palestine, and the Hebrews, Semitic nomads from the desert who conquered the rough hill country on both sides of the Jordan cleft, and there progressed to a primitive settled life. Little need be said of the Philistines, Minoan invaders from across the sea, who have vanished except for the name they bequeathed the country, and their mention in the literature of the Hebrews—which has survived to this day.

The Hebrews were essentially still a tribal, half nomadic, Semitic people, emotionally and intellectually probably nearer to the present Arab nomads than anything we can imagine. Clinging to the hills 'where the desert meets the

sown,' they had only just emerged from the great Arabian wasteland, that unassailable reservoir of wild, untamed tribes, where the nomad's code of tribal organization and primitive communism have survived more intensely than elsewhere, and longer. Like all such shifting half-nomads, they had little central authority, and their unstable tribal rulers were still rivalled by a religious soothsayer caste, the prophets who dominated the people through religious inspiration and prophecy.

They were a passionate people in character, living with undivided intensity : every good or evil action had to be extreme, for in every act a man was utterly fulfilled. The crude, passionate, savage background of their early literature shows them emotionally kindred to the Beduin tribes still roaming the Arabian desert of whom T. E. Lawrence wrote :

'They (the Semites) had no half-tones in their register of vision. They were a people of primary colours, or rather of black and white, who saw the world always in contour. They were a dogmatic people, despising doubt, our modern crown of thorns. . . . They knew only truth and untruth, belief and unbelief, without our hesitating retinue of finer shades.

'Their thoughts were at ease only in extremes. They inhabited superlatives by choice. Sometime inconsistencies seemed to possess them at once in joint sway ; but they never compromised ; they pursued the logic of several incompatible opinions to absurd ends.'

And :

'They were a people of spasms, of upheavals, of ideas, the race of the individual genius. Their movements were the more shocking by contrast with the quietude of every day, their great men greater by contrast with the humanity of their mob. Their convictions were by instinct, their activities intuitional. Their largest manufacture was of creeds.'

Black and white : it was in a spirit continually hovering between greatness and degradation that the Hebrew tribes struggled with each other and their enemies in their hill country between the Mediterranean and the desert, insecurely wedged between the great cities of Nineveh



and Babylon to the north and the great southern slave empire of Egypt, with its monuments and Delta water-works.

{ For a brief spell, under two kings, David (c. 1010-970 B.C.) and Solomon (c. 970-930 B.C.), they gained a series of victories over the Philistines and other neighbours, and established a brief supremacy over all Palestine.)

But they had little talent for political organization. In fact, in their small, undeveloped country, without trading or craft tradition, they wholly lacked the economic basis for it. Nor did they show much military or administrative ability. Their rule remained uncentralized and insecure, their social order that of unstable settled nomads. After Solomon's death the Philistine coastlands rose in successful revolt, other parts of Palestine broke away, and the Hebrew kingdom itself, torn by uncompromising dissension, split into two sections, the kingdom of Israel in the northern uplands, and the kingdom of Judah around the capital of Jerusalem to the south. These two Hebrew kingdoms for a time retained their independence, but as soon as the new military power of Assyria began to expand from the north, towards Egypt, they were doomed. The end approached relentlessly. (After several previous advances the great Assyrian conqueror, Sargon II, marched through Palestine, crushing the Israelites and the other small kingdoms, according to Assyrian custom exiling the best part of the population to a remote corner of Assyria. Submitting, the small Hebrew kingdom of Judah retained a shadow independence as a kind of border march between Assyria and the Egyptians, but in 585 B.C., after military defeat, unsuccessful revolt and military defeat again, the city of Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of the new Babylonian empire which had succeeded Assyria; the Temple of Jehovah was razed to the ground, and most of the unfortunate population, the whole upper class at least, deported to Babylon.)

And here ended the unstable period of Hebrew rule in Palestine, which had endured only for a few brief centuries.

Yet this period is one of the most remarkable in human history ; it produced the poetic exhortations and warnings of the early Hebrew prophets, a literature of revolt so uncompromising, passionate, and heart-searching, that its subject-matter, the sordid tale of despotism, fratricide, betrayal and defeat in war, which makes up the history of the two Hebrew kingdoms, seems almost irrelevant.

The interesting problem, to-day, is the social function which lay behind the moral message of the prophets, and which can only be understood in relation to the social, economic, and religious background of the world in which they lived. The whole age was an interregnum lasting roughly from 1100-700 B.C., between the fall of the older Egypt and Babylon and the rise of new powers. Palestine and all the Middle East were in a state of anarchy. Small, changing, continually warring kingdoms rose, fell, fought in bloody struggles, but always within narrow local frontiers. There were no great roads, no unusual accumulations of wealth, no great cities except directly on the seaboard. And similarly, there was no security against the threat of conquest by one or other of the great outside powers whose obvious strategic frontiers all met in Palestine.

‘The coast road from Egypt to Syria has some claim to rank as the most famous of all roads of history. Up and down the seaward level had marched the great armies of Egypt and Assyria, while the Jews looked on fearfully from their barren hills. From Sennacherib to Mark Antony, that strip of plain had been the gate on which Empires clashed.’<sup>1</sup>

The most dangerous threat came from the tyrannical military nation in the north, the Assyrians, whose brutal ‘Empire of Spoliation’ grew steadily from Mesopotamia towards Egypt. Under their great military leaders with the resounding names, Tiglat Pileser, Shalmaneser, Assurbanipal, Assyrian armies rolled down one after the other, invincible, spreading devastation where they went. But Assyrian power until the very end remained military and not administrative ; the Assyrian armies won battle after

<sup>1</sup> John Buchan, *Augustus*, p. 292.

battle, crushing local revolt only to find it reappear again and again. Towards the height of their power they were forced to the strategy of shifting and transporting whole populations to consolidate their rule. It was in the shadow of such perpetual Assyrian conquest and exile that the small Hebrew kingdoms arose and that the Hebrew prophets lived and preached their message.

It was also a time of change in the social life of the Hebrew people. Harsh and primitive discipline of the desert was fast breaking up. Villages and even small towns were arising in which new merchant, priestly, and kingly castes came to the fore while the rest of the people sank down to be exploited. It was the prophets who fought against this change. The prophet caste, a caste of soothsayers ruling through dogmatic prophecies and inspiration, opposed to worldly rule, goes back to the dim origins of the Semitic nomads. They were the upholders of the old. The whole struggle of the earlier prophets, Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, shows them as passionate upholders of the relentless desert discipline, with its unbending code of equality and duty imposed by sheer desert poverty. This opposition was not merely reactionary, but an attempt to preserve the virtues of an old order in destructive new surroundings.

Violently, the prophets opposed the rise of central power, of property, classes, and relaxing clan and family spirit; luxurious tastes, growing cleavage into more and more defined social castes, exploitation by the rich--princes, merchants, moneylenders. They fought equally against the new religious interests exploiting the superstition of the people, priesthoods grouped round local temples and images, exacting their tribute, battenning on ignorance. The prophets Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel all cried out against sharp religious practices of Canaanite origin. Elijah had fought a life-and-death struggle against Tyrian gods. 'Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?' Amos cried out. It was part of the greatness of their struggle that in

fighting the priesthood they showed up the emptiness of ritual and broke with it altogether.

But how, without strong central rule, without monarchy, ruling class, or priesthood could the Hebrews defend themselves against the dangers arising on every side ?

Uncompromisingly, the prophets refused to admit political necessity for such rule. With political realism they mocked what seemed to them the overbearing pretensions of the petty Hebrew kings and soldiers. When Isaiah called out ' Assyria ' and Jeremiah ' Babylon,' it was not a cry to arms, like Demosthenes' warning cry of ' Macedon ' to the Athenians, but the opposite : judgment of inevitable defeat and doom sent by the Lord upon His people because they had lost themselves in evil life and forsaken Him. Attempts to avoid political doom were useless ; only submission could still avail. ' The sanctuary of Israel shall be laid waste ; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.'

So what could they offer the people ? Only submission ? Seeking morality in the wilderness of an immoral world, the prophets did not falter. In compensation they preached an intense simplified monotheism to the people. There was only one great true God ; in comparison, what was worldly power ?

' From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name is great among the Gentiles ; and every place unto my name a pure offering is burnt.'

There was only one way out for the Hebrew people : luxury, wealth, and pretensions to power must be abandoned ; the people must return to the harsh simplicity which was good because it was the life of God : they must again become the poor ascetic shepherds living in a state of poverty on the hills whom conquerors and armies ignored, even if this involved restless subjugation by the might of Assyria, because such subjugation was only external, did not matter. Military power and worldly success were vain. God was above all ; Assyria and Babylon, Tyre and Egypt

would in their turn crash to prophesied doom. Only the spiritual was real.

It was a harsh message, but what was man that he should demand to be comforted? 'Seek ye not for the coming of the Lord; for it is of darkness and not of light,' Amos said.

It was a supreme effort by passionate desert adherents against civilization, an effort, not to give Caesar his due but to transcend him.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, this could not last. It was too much for the people. The prophets were primitive men. in the precarious life of the day they swung from extreme to extreme. The Hebrew crowd they addressed could be inspired, but it was only too human in its weakness. Gradually the message could no longer be upheld. Later prophecy no longer preached this stark extremism. The prophets were reconciled with temporal rulers -- religion, God, the Messiah, gradually became national; at the same time the priestly ritual of Semitic antiquity against which Amos and Hosea had fought returned to a large extent.

The later Jewish prophets--after a gap --were concerned with maintaining the purity of the religious and moral codes, the exclusiveness of a dispersed mercantile Jewish community--a very different thing.

In fact, though the religious code which had developed had absorbed even the earliest Hebrew traditions, they were preaching it to a very different people--the Jews.

And this, in a new historical period.

In 538 B.C., fifty years after the destruction of Jerusalem and the 'Babylonian Captivity', Babylon itself, already corrupt and decadent, was superseded by the empire of the Aryan Persians which began a new sphere of history: the whole Middle East, from the Persian Gulf to the Nile, was

<sup>1</sup> Compare D. H. Lawrence, an isolated minor prophet of our own day, who wrote during the last war:

'You say this is life, life is like that. But this is mere sophistry. Life is what one wants in one's soul, and in my soul I do not want this wretched conglomerated messing, therefore I deny that this is life at all, it is only baseness and sporadic, meaningless sensationalism.'--Lawrence, *Collected Letters*, p. 404.

unified under central rule, commerce and intercourse advanced enormously by new roads and security, and—important innovation—subject nations were granted local autonomy and freedom of religious worship was restored.

Outstanding among the communities now free to re-establish their religious life was that of the Jews, scattered through the empire.

But from every account it is clear that the 'Jews' in the Persian Empire were quite a different community from the Hebrews dwelling in Palestine a hundred years earlier.

The latter had been a small, poor, agricultural people struggling for life in a rough hill country.

In the Persian Empire the Jews were a predominantly urban and mercantile community, spread over the cities of the empire, markedly prominent in banking and commerce, strongly held together by their religion. Many of the Jewish communities were wealthy and important; Persian records mention Jews frequently as financial administrators, land agents and tax collectors (exactly as in Eastern Europe in the late Middle Ages); Ezra and Nehemiah, leaders of the Palestine rebuilding movement, were official emissaries of the highest standing at the Persian court. Palestine, even when restored and repopulated, though focal point of the Jewish religion, only held a minority of the Jews. The 'return' from Babylonia to Jerusalem, though given moral and financial support by most of the 'exiles,' only involved a small minority—for the multitude of Jews remaining in the wealthy centres of Egypt and Babylonia it was the Zionism of the day.

How can this change be understood?

In his *Outline of History* Wells says: the Jews came to Babylon barbarians, and returned civilized. But this has no historical logic. Babylon was no finishing school or commercial college, where a small nation of shepherds and peasants and petty nobles could acquire the commercial experience and accumulated merchant's capital to change

overnight (what are fifty, sixty years ?) into a flourishing commercial community. But there is no need for mystery, because there is no reason to regard the numerous Jews of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. as racially identical with the Hebrew people of two hundred years earlier, though they might have absorbed that people. In fact, the inexplicable revolutionary change in the social position of the Jews shows simply and obviously that it was not a question of the same people. The Hebrew religion rather than the Hebrew people had spread widely among scattered Semitic groups, particularly among trading peoples, Hittites, of which there is considerable evidence, and Phoenicians, as Wells himself suggests.

There was nothing exceptional about this. Derived from common mythological origins, the various Semitic religions of the Middle East were closely alike in form, if varying in substance and purity of inspiration. Religious experiments and mass conversions under the Assyrian and Babylonian kings show how easily they could be interchanged. Already while the two Palestine kingdoms existed, the Hebrew worship of Jehovah had been concentrated there rather than identical with them or confined to their frontiers - witness the eternal struggle against foreign religious elements proselytizing in Palestine itself, and, on the other hand, the existence of considerable Jehovah-worshipping communities as far from Jerusalem as Upper Egypt. Under Babylon and Persia a coalescing, spreading, and unification of monotheist Jehovah-worship must have taken place, of which there is little direct evidence. But the fact that the first two hundred years under the Persians, apparently barren of Jewish political history, witnessed a great flowering of Jewish religious literature (Job, Psalms, Ruth, etc.), supports the theory that this was the creative and growing period of Jewish religion.

At any rate, what can be said with certainty is that during the first hundred years of the great Persian Empire a new 'Jewish' religion, based on a nucleus of the earlier Hebrew prophetic faith, with considerable changes and

additions, emerged as a strong, widespread religion with numerous adherents. In 444 B.C., when Nehemiah, an aristocratic Persian religious Jew, cup-bearer to the Persian monarch, proclaimed the authoritative codified version of the 'Thorah' (Pentateuch)—generally accepted as the starting-point of Jewish religion—he unified religious worship for a community or sect already scattered in large numbers through the Middle East, through most of the cities of Babylonia, Egypt, and Syria.

This, then, and not the later tradition of a romantic scattering after defeat in war,<sup>1</sup> was the beginning of the Jewish Diaspora. The new Jewish code proclaimed from Jerusalem by Ezra and Nehemiah, legalizing Jewish temples and worship wherever Jews were settled, imposing strict exclusiveness and high religious and moral discipline, represented a religious-moral code specially adapted to the needs of a wide-flung trading people. In fact, Jewish dispersion, and the nature of the new Jewish religion, were aspects of one process. The first emergence, spread, and crystallization of Judaism differed little from the rise of earlier religions, or the rise of Christianity and Islam. Each faith had its dispersed adherents, not confined to one country, but grouped loosely round a religious centre. Particularly in the Roman age, the holy city of Jerusalem bore much the same relation to the Jewish faith—pilgrimage, contributions, etc.—that Mecca bears to Islam to-day. The decisive character of Judaism, however, was that after a certain stage no further proselytizing went on, and the Jewish community, on the contrary, developed a compact group existence; which was probably connected with the second characteristic, that the Jewish communities were led by a definite wealthy Jewish merchant class, well represented in Middle Eastern trade, particularly in the rich cities of Babylonia.

The next *fifteen hundred years* saw an expansion of this

<sup>1</sup> The defeat of the Palestine Jews by the Romans, and the destruction of the Second Temple took place five hundred years later: and by that time only a minority of the Jews lived in Palestine.



trading group which spread a network of Jewish communities from Baghdad (the Arab successor to Babylon) to Spain, England, Germany, and through Byzantium as far as Nijni-Novgorod, the ancient market-town in the depth of the Russian plains.

## CHAPTER III

### HOW THE JEWS CAME TO EUROPE

WHAT lay behind this Jewish expansion? Obviously the Jews must have performed some function, fulfilled some vital need in their contemporary world. That Jewish prominence in trade and banking extended over a thousand years is remarkable, but the Jews are not unique in this. Other great trading peoples of classical times, Egyptians, Phœnicians, or Greeks, had each in turn dominated Mediterranean trade for century after century. But what is remarkable about the expansion of the Jews is that it apparently continued regardless of changing political regimes, and that it was several times accompanied by anti-Semitic outbreaks, in Alexandria, in Imperial Rome, and, finally, on a catastrophic scale, in medieval Europe.

These anti-Jewish reactions need explanation as much as the tenacious survival of the Jews. Notions of instinctive hatred, religious fanaticism, or intuitive differences in the end lead nowhere. The clue must rather be sought in some special but constant Jewish function. And, in fact, as soon as Jewish history is logically examined, the clue to the continued Jewish spread is also the clue to the anti-Semitic reactions. Contrary to the usual belief, the first Jewish penetration of Europe was not so much a migration as an expansion.

What might be called the Jewish nucleus did not shift. Throughout the age-long period of Jewish trading activity, from about 500 B.C. to A.D. 1000, the numerical, economic, and cultural Jewish centre lay in the Middle East, among the Jewish communities of Babylonia, that ancient store-

house of accumulated wealth, closely linked to the Egyptian and Syrian Jews. The direction of Jewish expansion, in spite of occasional persecutions and expulsions, was not haphazard but always followed a definite line—roughly in an east to west direction, from economically more developed into economically less developed countries; that is, an expansion following the ancient route of trade. But as the Jewish communities engaged not only in trade but invariably in credit operations, culminating finally in a Jewish finance and banking organization extending from Baghdad to medieval England, France, Germany, Spain, it is clear that the function of this Jewish network, and therefore of Jewish migration, particularly through bridging the gap between the break-up of Rome and the end of the Dark Ages, was the slow transfer of surplus merchants' capital from the earlier developed East to the younger West, a kind of primitive imperialism of commerce. This transfer, carried on for a thousand years, fertilized Europe—but at a price to be paid to the Jews; if it fertilized Europe it also strengthened it economically: and it is as reaction against this function, a revolt of the younger West against an older economic organization, that the medieval wave of anti-Semitism is to be understood.

(The steady progress of Jewish expansion, and its immense duration, distinguished it among early trading movements. Already in the last centuries just before the Christian era Jews had spread to Egypt, Asia Minor, and Greece. In Alexandria, greatest city of antiquity, the Jews and Greeks were perpetual rivals for control. The conquest of the East by a more westernly power, Rome, did not affect Jewish penetration.) Unlike its modern counterpart, Roman imperialism rested on political plunder rather than commerce. While the legions extended Roman rule over the Eastern Mediterranean, Greek, Egyptian, and Jewish traders spread into the western part of the Empire, even into Rome itself. (The Jews entered Italy through their control of the grain trade, controlled chiefly by Greek-speaking Jews from Egypt, the granary of Rome. They

succeeded in setting up a large community on the left bank of the Tiber, which grew steadily and whose wealth and connections were apparently sufficiently important to the Romans for the latter to permit the Jews a large degree of social and administrative autonomy. )

Jewish increase within the Empire was parallel with the latter's growth.

'By the time of Cicero, 59 B.C., the Jews had sufficient influence and numbers to disturb the orderliness of the law-courts. . . . Long before the Vespasianic Wars Gentile authorities such as Strabo concurred with patriotic Jews like Philo in bearing testimony to the world-wide spread of the Diaspora.'<sup>1</sup>

At the time of the famous census of A.D. 70, the millions of Jews in the Roman Empire numbered one-twelfth of the whole population, and were socially and politically at least as outstanding as in the great cities of Western Europe or North America to-day ; as a trading-banking organization they were far more important.

Countering charges of Jewish parasitism, Jewish historians have lately been at great pains to show how much the Jews of classical times were not merely traders and bankers, but also agriculturalists and artisans, in fact, spread over a whole range of occupations. The motives for these arguments are understandable ; nevertheless, they also only confuse the issue. Greece and the Lebanon also contain masses of peasants and artisans, yet the Greeks and Phœnicians were essentially trading people. Of course, the Jews were not a trading-banking organization in the same sense as Barclays Bank. But it is the ruling class of every people which determines its social character, and this ruling class among the Jew *was* a trading and banking class.

'In Imperial Rome Jews were to be found in almost every walk of life. They were merchants, pedlars, painters, actors, poets, singers, butchers, tailors, and blacksmiths. As beggars they were peculiarly importunate ; and after Christianity established itself, some actually sold holy images on the steps

<sup>1</sup> C. Roth, *Menorah Journal*, Summer, 1934.

of the churches. The backbone of the community, however, was the merchant class. They were probably largely responsible for the importations of corn which made possible the policy of satisfying the proletariat with bread and circuses.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, it is remarkable how weak the hold of Jewish religion was on those Jews not linked to the Jewish merchant aristocracy, and how easily such Jewish groups like the Arab-Jewish tribes of Arabia, the military Jews of Egypt, or the vine-growing Jews of North Africa, vanished from history. As another Jewish historian, Dr. A. Ruppin, concludes :

‘ Only those Jews count in history and the present who have remained Jews, i.e. who combine their distinct religion with differences in occupation, who have engaged in commerce and settled in the town.’<sup>2</sup>

To the Romans the Jewish trading-banking-insurance network was not inimical but useful, and that for two reasons. In the first place, it was an efficient instrument of that international commerce on which they depended so largely for their taxes. Secondly, in its reverse aspect of international organization for providing credit (rivalled, though not equalled, by the Greeks) it provided the Roman ruling class with the vital capital needed to defray its endless military operations, and its endless payments to the Roman urban proletariat. It is easy to see, therefore, why Roman rulers and the Jews should have come into conflict when the plundered empire was growing exhausted, or why unpopular Roman war lords should have tried anti-Jewish riots as a means of diverting mass discontent from themselves.

The break-up of the Roman Empire, an assertion of local nationalism on the part of the less-developed subject peoples west of Rome, instead of striking a death-blow at the international trading-banking network of the Jews - as would have been the case in a mere destruction by

<sup>1</sup> C. Roth, *Short History of the Jewish People*, p. 198.

<sup>2</sup> A. Ruppin, *The Jews in the Modern World*, p. 132.

barbarian invasion—weakened this network by reducing international trade almost to a minimum. But because it left the Jews as almost the only survivors in such trade, it provided them with a vast new opening.

In Northern and Western Europe the end of Central Roman rule had changed the whole aspect of life. Roman roads, trade and slave estates, had vanished with Roman rule, and the life of Northern Spain, France, and England had changed back to one of primitive village agriculture, with young nations, none but local trade, and towns small and far between—the beginnings of a new historical world.

It was a growing, expanding world: the Jews, as only survivors of international trade, were pioneers in its development. From A.D. 400 to 1000, Jewish merchants advancing along waterways like the Rhine, the Danube, or the Seine by means of trading posts, or large fairs, such as the famous fairs of Champagne, which they founded and governed, steadily penetrated into Europe: Arabic-speaking Jews from Spain into Southern France, Latin-speaking Jews from Italy into Germany, and Greek-speaking Jews from Asia Minor into the Balkans and Russia. Practically without competition, they held almost complete monopoly over the only international trade of the time, that in spices, silks, perfumes, and precious stones from the East, and of grain across the Mediterranean. At the end of the ninth century their domination in Europe was so complete that in contemporary documents the terms Jew and merchant or usurer were used as synonyms.

But this monopoly also changed the social character of the European Jews. Previously they had excelled in trade; now they became the trading people *par excellence*. With the collapse of Rome, the Jewish peasant and labouring masses had fallen away and vanished. Now there only remained communities of Jewish merchants, ubiquitous, powerful, well-organized, bringing their caravans from Egypt and Persia to Europe, keeping strictly together, drawing their strength from their wide international co-operation. In race and religion and outlook as much as

in occupation they remained—by their own choice—wholly foreign in Europe (during the Dark Ages probably quite as foreign as the white sahibs in India), and in this lay a great part of the strength of their organization. They were highly educated and cultured, taking utmost pains to preserve their Eastern civilization. It was during the Dark Ages that Judaism became the great social-religious code meticulously regulating each detail of the life of the individual Jew, so keeping him inviolate from his barbarian surroundings.

Jewish success in trade has been suggested as the cause of anti-Semitism, but this is illogical. The trading work of the Jews was not disliked but welcomed in the early medieval world ; it fulfilled a great need very well. But the reverse side of trading profit is credit : the Jewish organization also supplied the other great need of the time, ready cash and loans, and it is here that the Jews came into contact and ultimately into conflict with the surrounding European world.

Europe was changing. Across the broad acres of the Iberian, Gaulish, Germanic, and English peoples, the social pyramid of feudalism was slowly beginning to take shape. The leading soldiers—Franks, Saxons, Lombards—who had accomplished the overthrow of Rome to liberate exploited peasant peoples, now took the price of their liberating activity. In fact, the outstanding feature of the ' Dark Ages ' is the swiftness with which power was again centralized and a new ruling class—drawn from the ranks of the conquerors—arose in France, in Castile, Saxon and Norman England, in the Rhineland, and extended its rule by means of fortified towns and castles and permanent armies of powerful knights in expensive armour.

Such development demanded greater sums of ready cash than taxation of primitive agricultural countries could yield. There was only one source which could supply them—the Jewish merchants and bankers.

The mutual benefits of an alliance between the Crown and the Jewish credit organization were quickly realized,

and led to a usual arrangement whereby a Charlemagne, a William the Conqueror, or one of countless lesser princes would grant the Jews a charter, giving them rights of commerce and moneylending and his protection over these activities, in return for a fixed tribute or special tax or a percentage from each transaction, as the case might be.

As said, it was a mutually profitable relationship: the Jews had the country to exploit, the king had the necessary cash to keep a standing army and establish his rule. Yet what was more natural than that hatred against the Jews should grow up among all those subjected to their rule?

‘They (the common people) saw the money which had once been theirs pass into an unending stream through his (the Jew’s) chests into the royal treasure. They saw the king grow through this means independent of constitutional checks. And so their hatred mounted until one day, upon a trivial pretext or none, they would throw themselves upon the Jewish quarter, and yet another dark page would be added to the record of martyrdom.’<sup>1</sup>

While the king profited through special taxes and inheritance laws from Jewish financial activities, the actual dealings of the Jews were with the second emerging feudal class, the nobles, and to a lesser extent the Church.

Between the early form of scattered feudal chiefs, and the centralized feudal aristocracy at the close of the Middle Ages, there was a lengthy growth. The most remarkable stage of that growth was that between the lord of the manor, who, though legally an aristocrat, was merely an illiterate large farmer, and the bejewelled gentleman at court, no longer in direct contact with his land, with gay clothes, sweet-smelling oil in his hair, and hard cash in his pocket. For this change, too, a remarkable increase in the supply of ready money was necessary, and again who could better furnish these sums of hard cash—primitive capital—than the Jewish moneylenders and traders with their international connections? Most lovers of the Middle Ages would be surprised to learn how largely the colourful life

<sup>1</sup> C. Roth, *Short History of the Jewish People*, p. 207.



of the romantic medieval upper class—and what a small minority this class was amidst the grey darkness of serf and peasant life!—all the tournaments, the gay clothes of jewelled ladies, the great monasteries and first cathedrals, even the gallant crusade of a Richard Lionheart, were all dependent upon Jewish money.

But it was in the nature of such loans that, unlike modern industrial credit, they were spent only on personal use and adornment, and could naturally therefore never be wholly repaid. The rise to power of the European nobility was thus accompanied by a growing load of personal indebtedness to the foreign Jewish financiers. There was only one security for such loans: and the spectacle of a feudal aristocracy mortgaging its lands to Jewish bankers, but because of its deep-rooted tradition of ownership unwilling to surrender these lands without a struggle, appeared and has continued, as in the backward parts of Poland, into our own day.

The burden of indebtedness, the price for Jewish credit, was of course passed on. It was the unfortunate subject peasantry which ultimately paid the interest on Jewish loans by an increase in rents, taxes, or forced labour.

The situation bred its growing contradiction, which could have only one final outcome—a solution by force. Jewish credit had enabled the European nobility to strengthen its power, yet what was more natural than that this nobility should try to rid itself of its burden as soon as the first opportunity arrived? In fact, it is strictly parallel to the growth in power of the medieval aristocracy, that one can trace a wave of anti-Jewish movements culminating in the ‘pogroms,’ mass attacks upon Jewish quarters in which Jews were killed and their notes of hand and mortgages destroyed. The European aristocracy had used the Jewish capitalist, but objected to paying his price. Therefore, as soon as it was strong enough, it resolved this conflict by force.

The anti-Jewish riots of the Middle Ages can therefore be seen as the successful revolt and victory of younger European powers over an older capitalist group.

The pogroms were an obvious and deadly weapon, discovering the weak spot of the Jews, their dispersion and defencelessness, and facing supporters of the Jews, such as the king, with a *fait accompli*.

The unfortunate feature of these anti-Jewish riots was that they were carried out by the poor mobs who had little to gain by fighting their lord's battles for him ; all that happened was that Christian financiers took the place of the Jews. But the ruling class at any stage has public opinion in its hands, and feudal lords, whether in Roumania of the twentieth century or the Rhineland of the twelfth, find little difficulty in making the masses they exploit fight their battles for them. And in the Middle Ages popular opposition to Jewish usury, through which the king and nobles had risen to power, but for which the common people had suffered and paid, had accumulated an intolerable strain of revolt and hatred ; faced with two sets of oppressors, it was no wonder that the incited mobs turned against the one who as a stranger was all the more hateful in his racial and religious foreignness.

It was a swift collapse. In the wave of riots and pogroms which started in German Rhineland towards the close of the eleventh century and for the next hundred years spread from country to country in Europe, thousands of Jews lost their lives, and the Jewish financial power was broken for good. The riots which quickly assumed a religious aspect were linked to the other religious movement of contemporary Christianity, the Crusades. But though the desire of crusading nobles to rid themselves first of embarrassing debts before departing for distant Palestine provided a ready pretext, they had a deeper meaning. They signified something much more important—that in Europe of the eleventh and twelfth centuries the Jewish usurers and bankers were no longer indispensable.

Actually, the downfall of the Jews was only a sign of one of the greatest historical changes determining the whole trend of modern history. An age-old *East to West* movement of trade and capital, as old, perhaps, as known history,

and carried on in turn through Egyptians, Babylonians, Phœnicians, Greeks, and finally for almost five hundred years by the Jews alone, had come to an end. Europe was about to overtake the East ; fundamentally the Crusades were only a first crude result of this diminution in the flow of capital and precious goods from the decaying East. But the Crusades not only struck the Jews a mortal blow, they were also the means by which the special need for their services were overcome. Arab civilization had brought Europe and Asia back into contact. Non-Jewish merchants had found their way to the East ; new traders and bankers arose in Europe ; trade along new sea routes, in which the Jews had little part, came to the fore. Through the Crusades the Italian cities rose to unprecedented wealth and power. In Venice, Genoa, Amalfi, Florence, the great stores of merchant capital were accumulated from which the splendours of the Italian Renaissance were to spring. A new class of famous Catholic Italian bankers swiftly established a dominating position over Europe, with credit operations far greater than the efforts of the Jews. But the first act of these Christian bankers was to rid themselves of the remnants of Jewish rivalry by availing themselves of anti-Jewish prejudice. Unlike the Jews, they had the power of church and state behind them. Legal and spiritual excommunication followed riot and bloodshed in completing the downfall of the Jews. The final act was one of expulsion, repeated in every West European country and finally, under somewhat different circumstances, even in Spain, where the Jews had become largely intermingled with the local population.

By the end of the fourteenth century the power of the Jews, both in commerce and finance, had been utterly broken. The process was never complete. Here and there in small principalities a few Jews held out or isolated wealthy merchants saved themselves. But the history of the overwhelming majority of the half million to a million Jews in Europe was one of progressive degradation right down to modern times. They had no function in Europe. Cut

off from their hinterland in the East, they were a corpse without a head, an anachronism in Europe.

So much for the social-economic outline of the struggle. But two observations should be made.

Jewish historians—from pardonable motives—have tried to prove that the Jews became usurers and bankers because they came late into the medieval world, and all means of livelihood were closed to them.

Even a Jewish historian like Cecil Roth, quoted above, can write :

‘ A willing immigrant into a country already populated can as a matter of fact hardly find any outlet for his energy except in urban life. To settle on the land presupposes that there is land available, etc. etc.’

But this is an absurd putting of the cart before the horse. That the rise of Christian merchant guilds forced Jewish merchants to confine themselves to banking is irrelevant. The only reason why the Jews became capitalists was because they possessed liquid capital and had the organization for transferring it easily from place to place—and for no other reason.

If only restrictions against Jewish handicrafts or farming had counted, one might as well ask the unemployed in Wales to-day, equally unable to earn a living either as labourers or farmers, that they should therefore become capitalists !

Similarly, when Roth says,

‘ Upon a trivial pretext, or none, they (the mobs) threw themselves upon the Jewish quarter, and yet another dark page was added to the record of martyrdom ’

this is only half the story. The Jewish bankers’ profession was a dangerous one, but as against its risks it had for generations brought the Jews a disproportionately rich reward. No doubt the poor people themselves had nothing to gain by rioting ; they were only an instrument of their own oppressors, and the Christian moneylender who followed the Jews—there could be no economic vacuum—

because more powerful, exceeded them in rapacity. But the chief and enduring tragedy remained that of the people, the unhappy beasts of burden, whether exploited by Christian bankers or Jewish usurers, by monarchs, prelates, or nobles !

The second remarkable aspect of the anti-Jewish movement was the unique and enduring hatred aroused by the Jews.

Reasons for this exceptional outburst of popular hatred are not difficult to find. The religious turn given to the conflict was fatal above all. During the early Middle Ages, while the Christian Church in Europe was still young, its relations with the Jews were friendly enough : priests and Jews had frequently been drawn together as the only enlightened forces amidst the darkness. But the growth of the anti-Jewish movement, some centuries later, coincided with a period when the Church, grown into a wealthy, tyrannical ruling institution, was making a determined bid for hegemony over the whole of Europe. The Jews, as an independent source of capital, stood in the way of such domination, and, towards the period of the Crusades, the full blast of religious fanaticism was therefore officially turned against them. In an age of intense religious feeling the Jews, as uncompromising infidels, had always seemed uncanny. Now their strangeness became diabolical ; in the eyes of ignorant town and country mobs they became the emissaries of Antichrist, the people who had rejected Jesus Christ himself and had crucified Him. What, except blood, could wash this sin away ? And even more. For generations, for centuries, the financial power of the Jews had seemed uncanny to the mobs : it was ubiquitous, intangible, yet crushingly oppressive, rendering its service, but inexorably demanding its price. In the Middle Ages there was enough hatred and resentment perpetually smouldering among the crushed, exploited populace. What better object could be given this hatred than the Jewish financiers, foreigners and infidels, marked out and rendered utterly alien by a gap of two thousand years between their

civilization and that of Europe? No wonder that the outburst of anti-Jewish hatred took on the character of something demoniac: the Jewish financiers were not only blood-suckers and Christ-killers, they were the poisoners of wells, they drank the blood of Christian children, they desecrated the Mass, they were secretly plotting for the destruction of mankind; they were the cause of every disaster, as wicked as they were omnipresent and powerful--in short, they were not as other men, and therefore they were inhuman. Economic revolt against the Jewish credit structure, intensified by the religious sanction of an all-powerful Church and ready mob hatred of what was foreign and strange, together produced a wave of feeling so strong that, towards the height of the Crusades, general hatred of the Jewish unbelievers had already taken on a folkloristic character, that is, had become one of the most deep-rooted, unthinking, and therefore most lasting prejudices in the European mind.

And if feelings aroused by the great Catholic-Protestant struggles still survive in Europe to-day, what wonder that the anti-Jewish reaction, a far deeper emotion, should have survived for centuries after the Jews were doomed and crushed, subtly but incessantly embittering Gentile-Jewish relations to the present day?

## CHAPTER IV

### GHETTO NEUROSIS

THE next stage in Jewish history is the unique history of the Ghetto.

Why did the Jews survive at all? They should have died out or become lost at the end of the Middle Ages. Their separate function as merchants and bankers had brought them to Europe. Now, this function was lost. They were an anachronism. Europe no longer needed them. Why did they survive?

A number of factors contributed to this survival. The very foreignness of the Jews was the first. Their strength had been derived from their extraordinary social and religious rigidity. Even after hundreds of years in Europe they were still essentially a nation from the East, an end-product of the ancient Semitic Middle Eastern complex of nations. This same rigidity now hastened Jewish downfall, yet caused the Jews to survive: the force of two thousand years' tradition, brought almost unchanged from the days of Ezra and dominating each Jewish generation, carried on by its own weight for a long time after its significance had been lost.

The converse side to this was that because the Jews were so foreign in race, religion, and culture, medieval Europe could not absorb them. The spread of the institution of the *Ghetto*,<sup>1</sup> that wretched economic and spiritual preserve to which the Jews were rigidly confined, gives proof of the deep spiritual gap—expressed in appearance, manners as much as thought or creed—between medieval Europe and

<sup>1</sup> The name derives from that of the Jewish quarter in Venice, the first recognized Ghetto.

the Jews, a gap only exceeded by that between Europe and the gypsies. (The question here is of Northern and Western Europe, not Spain, that half European, half Arab country, where Jewish development had taken a different course.) But this essentially foreign quality of the Jews had a two-fold effect. If it caused their virtual imprisonment, it yet provided them with a miserable corner of their own, where they could survive and lead their own communal life, which naturally became a parody of their previous state.

But for all that the Jews would have become so few in numbers that they would have disappeared entirely in the storm and stress of modern life, had it not been for another reason, that at the time of their greatest persecution new countries were open to them where they could save themselves.

In the medieval Jewish history of persecution and expulsions, there was one haven of refuge—Poland, and to a lesser degree the rest of Eastern Europe. Here, where centralization of government had never really succeeded, and the country had consequently remained backward, predominantly agricultural with few large towns, countless separate estates and villages and practically *no native middle class*, the Jews, when expelled elsewhere, were frequently invited to settle by the Polish kings who hoped for profit and progress from their immigration.

Here, in this primitive world, the Jews found a social function to perform; they were refugees, and no longer possessed surplus capital, but they were able to utilize their commercial and administrative ability; they became go-betweens between the Polish aristocratic landlords and their peasantry, estate agents, tax collectors, casual clerks, every kind of small trader, and particularly keepers of public houses (the monopoly in vodka was in the hands of the big landlords who, to save themselves trouble and to gain bigger profits, everywhere leased it to the Jews). In short, they became an exploited, insecure petty bourgeoisie, a precocious forerunner of the insecure small middle class



of the present age. Yet the possession of even these functions, aided by the late and imperfect development of the Polish guilds, which left scope for a Jewish class of small artisans, was an advantage to the Polish Jews and enabled them to change from a merchant to an employee community, and thus survive.

While in the West lucrative trade and plunder of overseas countries led to that accumulation of wealth from which modern capitalism arose, the Jews, except in isolated individual cases, had no significant part in the development ; the small Ghetto communities in Western Europe stagnated or declined. But in Eastern Europe the Jews slowly spread and increased, living mainly in the villages, creating a curious separatist, introvert Jewish culture, still speaking with their modified Jewish-German dialect, living apart from the Slav villagers around them. In the eighteenth century Poland was the cultural and numerical centre of Jewry, and it is only this new transformed group of Jews, and its descendants, which—numerically—has played any significant group part in modern history.

Yet, whether in Eastern Europe or the Ghettos of the West, Jewish existence was squalid and hopeless. After two thousand years of great mercantile civilization<sup>1</sup> they lingered on, were, in fact, forced to linger on, without hope of betterment, in the midst of a hostile and crushingly stronger world. Naturally, Jewish mentality and character were changed. Roth gives a vivid description of the highest intellectual ability forced into degradation and mental imprisonment :

‘ The result was what might have been expected. Life became indescribably petty. There was a superlative degree of inbreeding, both physical, social, and intellectual. By the

<sup>1</sup> Actually, the flourishing periods of Jewish trade and finance, and of Jewish civilization, have always coincided, as in Babylonia (the age of the Talmud), in Alexandria (Greek and Jewish philosophy and literature), and in Spain (Arab and Jewish philosophy, literature, and science). The share of the network of Jewish communities in bridging the gap between ancient and modern civilization is so great that it is difficult to estimate.

time the Ghetto had been in existence a couple of centuries, it was possible to see the result. Physically the type of Jew had degenerated. He had acquired a perpetual stoop. He had become timorous and in some cases neurotic. Degrading occupations, such as money-lending and dealing in old clothes, originally imposed, became a second nature hard to throw off. His sense of solidarity with his fellow Jews became fantastically exaggerated and was accompanied by a personal sense of grievance against the Gentile who was responsible for his lot.

‘ Even from the specific Jewish point of view the Jew in the end showed signs of losing his sense of proportion. Every item in the traditional scheme was now sacrosanct and had attained like importance in his eyes. Superstition was on the increase, and in some cases acquired religious sanction. After two centuries of ghetto life the institution appeared to be doing its work, and the repression of the Jews, intellectually and morally as well as physically, was well advanced.’<sup>1</sup>

There was something very human, and pathological, in this Jewish clinging to dead ritual; a mental state which has its effects upon Western Jews even to-day. It was the thousand-year-old strength of the Jewish tradition which, once it had been overthrown, produced an equally strong reaction of defeatism. It is not enough to say that the Jews, persecuted and crushed by the surrounding world, found compensation in their religion. For how can the stroking of inanimate objects, the mumbling of mechanical formulæ, compensate for wealth, power, learning, the riches of life? No, the process went deeper. Practising psychoanalysts know that the Jews suffer proportionately more than others from the mental illness known as compulsion neurosis. The whole queer standstill of Jewish history in the Ghetto, as Freud remarks somewhere, was one long compulsion neurosis. It was as if the sudden collapse of the rigid Jewish social life in riots, bloodshed, and expulsions had been too much for the mind of the Jews. They could only bear such disaster by turning away from it. Their solution—apparently the only one possible—was neurotic. Jewish religion—designed to preserve Jewish strength and cohesion—had lost its

<sup>1</sup> C. Roth, *A Short History of the Jewish People*, p. 308.

meaning. And yet every defeat, every degradation of the Jews did not make them less religious, but more so. Having no alternative, they embraced their misfortune. As each disastrous blow fell, and the more despicable it became to be a Jew, the more vital did it seem to the Jews for queer reasons to observe every detail of Jewishness, because every slightest detail of observance now had its own symbolical value. On the contrary, every Jewish effort at self-help, emancipation, change, was fanatically opposed by the orthodox Jews—such effort would create a dangerous gap in the spiritual barrier they had put up between themselves and reality. Instead, with each blow they fled more into mechanical ritual, consoling themselves for present misery by a meaningless veneration of their past ; just as an individual neurotic patient, unable to cope with reality, seeks refuge in the performance of some meaningless action, symbolizing the conflict he cannot resolve. But, as in the case of the individual, though the Jews could not cope with the real world, their neurotic way out kept them alive as a national unit.

## CHAPTER V

### JEWS UNDER CAPITALISM

**I**N the eighteenth century—the age of enlightenment—the lot of the Jews was slightly relieved. Full freedom for the Jews, however, was only introduced by the French Revolution. Since then another phase of Jewish history has run its course. The Jews were drawn into the capitalist whirlpool ; they increased in numbers, spread to the great cities, became assimilated, achieved great power, wealth, and distinction, tasted freedom—and then, destruction again. All this in the course of the hundred and fifty years of the capitalist epoch.

Round the year 1800 the Jews in all Western and Central Europe only numbered a few hundred thousand. In Eastern Europe nearly a million Jews were scattered through the villages and small towns of Poland and Russia. Throughout the nineteenth century the history of these two Jewish communities was largely separate—like that of the two parts of Europe in which they lived.

In Western Europe, where Jewish Ghetto existence had seemingly remained motionless since the Middle Ages, it was shown that Jewish commercial and financial tradition had yet been preserved. The voice of the Comte de Clermont-Torrère in the Constituent Assembly of December 1789, proclaiming civic and legal equality for *le citoyen juif*, laid the foundation for Jewish emancipation. But mere legal permission to leave the Ghetto would not have availed the Jews much ; the swift Jewish exodus from the Ghetto must be explained by economic developments in the outside world, of which legal equality for the Jews was only an

expression, and which were on the whole exceptionally favourable for the Jews.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century capitalism was on the march. It swept over the Ghetto walls with the same swiftness that it swept away the medieval guilds, annihilated the British hand-weavers, or wiped out petty restrictive frontiers within Germany and Italy.

There was an urgent demand for the services of middlemen, money-changers, traders of all kinds, services which the Jews could excellently render, and they were not slow to take advantage of this opportunity. For the second time they were fated to play an important part in the economic life of Europe. But a decisive difference must be noted. In the Middle Ages the Jews had represented a foreign capitalist organization investing in, and in the economic sense, exploiting Europe. In the nineteenth century, individual exceptions apart, the Jews were not capitalists; they were essentially middlemen, part of the growing new middle class which had sprung up, and their history has been a part of the history of the modern middle class. As such, modern Jewish history can be divided into two sharply opposed phases: that contemporary with the rise of the middle class up to about 1860-70, and that contemporary with middle class decline—our present period.

The first capitalist age saw the continuous rise to power of the middle class. It was the age of the individual *entrepreneur*. The effect of the first impact of capitalism upon the old middle class had been twofold. Part of the class of small independent men was relentlessly torn from its social foundations and turned into the new labouring proletarians in the factories and mines. To serve the needs of these new concentrations of 'free' labourers who could no longer provide for their own food and clothing, an entirely new middle class of shop-keepers, traders, shippers, overseers, and clerks sprang up; the new industrial and commercial middle class which, led by rising independent business men, stamped the first fifty years of the nineteenth century with its social and material out-

look. And who could be more fitted by commercial tradition and experience to take part in this development than the Jews? They might have little capital, but as traders, wholesalers, money-changers, their services were valuable and valued. In a number of commercial spheres, particularly wholesale and international trade, Jews played a very prominent part during the great expansion of the early nineteenth century. With a great tradition of literacy and quick, intelligent thinking behind them it was not difficult for numerous Jews to rise rapidly in wealth and influence. They dominated, above all, in their ancient sphere of international trade and banking, where their international position was then start and where a few famous Jewish families, like the Rothschilds, Cassels, Perchins, for a time commanded European finance.

This economic absorption of the Jews into the European middle class was reflected in their rapid cultural assimilation. How far were they still Jews? The neurosis of Jewishness, which misery had only seemed to intensify, was suddenly broken by prosperity. During the first half of the nineteenth century the Jews of France, England, Holland and Germany competed with each other in shedding their Jewishness, adopting the language, customs, and dress of their bourgeois surroundings, and in becoming merely part of the middle class of their various countries.

Of course, the process could not be completed within one or two generations. Odd traces of Jewish tradition and the Ghetto neurosis still lingered, holding the Jews together. They mostly remained Jews by religion (formally at least); married among themselves, created their own special European Jewish society, even though outwardly they tended to become more and more ordinary Englishmen or Frenchmen or Germans, as the case might be.

Yet these remnants of old Jewishness were progressively diminishing, dropping entirely away through baptism or intermarriage, vanishing in the crowd.

In fact, if it had only been for the Western Jews, the Jews, and with them the Jewish question, would have

vanished in the nineteenth century, or they would have become so few in numbers and so assimilated as to be insignificant.

But behind these assimilated Jews in the Western cities there still stood the other Jewry, the mass of desperately poor, oppressed Jews spread across the small towns and villages of Russia.

Here, too, the first impacts of modern capitalism had made themselves felt. The armies of Napoleon had marched and re-marched across the plains, Russia had been brought into European alliance, ideas of the French Revolution and Western technique had filtered across the frontiers. The Jewish population, too, was stirred out of the stagnation of the Ghetto. In the primitive industrialization of Western Russia the Jews, as a middle class layer were particularly involved. But not for long. The dead hand of Russian feudalism lay heavily on the subject provinces. Industrialization remained painfully slow. Jewish emancipation made no progress. On the contrary, the Tzarist rulers continued to discriminate against the Jew, worst of all by oppressive and rigid confinements of all except a minute minority of the Jews to a narrow settlement zone, the so-called *Jewish Pale*, where overcrowding soon became intolerable. The first impact of westernization had led to one fundamental change in Jewish life: an immediate and marked increase in numbers. In fact, considering that it was not accompanied by great industrial development, the population increase of the East European Jews in the last hundred and fifty years has been phenomenal. Between 1800 and 1930, Jews of East European stock increased fifteen-fold, from less than a million in 1800 to nearly fourteen million to-day. The causes of this unique increase are to be sought in two special aspects of Jewish social life: greater religious orthodoxy, militating against birth control, and traditionally superior standards of hygiene and infant care. (It may be mentioned here that not only has this increase stopped, but that the Jews are to-day fast declining in numbers.) At any rate, this Jewish population increase

continued unchecked throughout the nineteenth century. The result, naturally, was to intensify Jewish overcrowding. A certain Jewish minority was forced down into the ranks of wage-labourers in special Jewish sweated industries—textiles, garment, leather, and food trades—but this brought little relief. Nor, under Tsarism, was there any prospect of betterment. Only migration seemed to hold out opportunities, and as emigrants the Jews had a long tradition.

As a result, towards the middle of the nineteenth century a steady Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe set in, beginning with a small movement towards the cities of Western Europe, and gradually swelling in the last two decades before the War to a vast stream which sent millions of Jews to the new overseas countries, until, finally, almost every city in the world had its Jewish community. The high point of this immigration came later, but already early in the nineteenth century, in the 'fifties and 'sixties, this Jewish migration made itself noticeable, not only compensating the Western Jewish communities for those members who dropped away, but causing them slowly to increase. Still, the new-comers, too, quickly became westernized, and at this stage of capitalist expansion and optimism it was thought only a question of time till Jewish assimilation would be complete, that is, till old prejudices would die out, and the European Jews become absorbed by their surroundings.

Not so in the next period, that of finance-capitalism and imperialism. This development may be dated from about 1860, when the British capitalists began to export their surplus capital abroad. It has seen the independent middle class change into an employed serving class, as the working class was changed a hundred years before.

This change had three main aspects :

(1) Continued export of capital, leading to overseas development coupled with growing unemployment at home.

(2) The rise of immense productive units, and the forced



change of the class of independent business men, professional men, producers, agents, into a vast bureaucracy hired by big business, trusts, government bodies.

(3) The rise of large distributive concerns of the chain- and department-store and mail-order variety, which are steadily eliminating the independent shop-keeping class, the last survivors.

The end result of the change is one vast 'salaried,' property-owning but in servitude to the State, to finance capitalism. This result can already be glimpsed in the 'Company towns' in the U.S.A. or in National-Socialist Germany. Most social conflicts of to-day, if we would only recognize them properly, are convulsions induced by this change, in its way as deep and far-reaching a transformation as the creation of the industrial proletariat a hundred years ago, and it is in this middle class change that the Jews, a minority section of the middle class, have been most violently involved.

They were involved particularly because of its uneven development throughout the capitalist world.

In the great empire-owning countries before the War, Britain, Germany, France, and the U.S.A., the demand for the new administrative bureaucracy for a time expanded faster than it could be satisfied by the old middle class, so that middle class opportunities for advance were always plentiful, and unemployment almost unknown. In such a situation the services Jews could provide were thought advantageous to the country, and the swift rise of middle class Jews, even of foreign Jewish immigrants, caused little resentment.

More than anywhere was this true in pre-War Imperial Germany, changing and expanding so quickly that its demand for a new bureaucracy and technicians could hardly be satisfied. With their long tradition of literacy and commercial skill behind them, the Jews had a quick start: German Jews, never numerous, but including an exceptional number of gifted and outstanding men, played a significant role in the building up of the German Empire.

Half the great German business units, such as the I. G. Farben Chemical Trust, the Hamburg-Amerika Line, the Deutsche Bank, the Ullstein Publishing House, were built up by Jewish initiative (though, if anything, the German Jews were more concentrated in the professions than in business management). Anti-Jewish sentiment, however deep-rooted in the German folk-mind, only found expression within narrow limits. The essential harmony between this rise of the Jews and the need of the German Empire for their services found expression in their ready acceptance by German society, relatively small but steadily growing intermarriage, individual Jewish change-over to Christianity, and the reward of outstanding Jewish achievement by the highest honours and even by titles of nobility.<sup>1</sup>

So much for the ready acceptance of the Jews in the imperialist countries. But exactly the opposite was happening in the backward areas of Europe. Kept back by the deadweight of the reactionary feudal regimes, the Russian and Austrian empires (where the majority of the Jews lived) had in the nineteenth century dropped back to semi-colonial status, a field for exploitation by Western—i.e. British, French, German—capital. Consequently the scope for the native middle class, which was little more than an agent class for foreign capital, was small, too small to keep pace with the destruction of the old order which was simultaneously going on. As a result, in both empires, middle class stringency and pauperization became symptomatic, resulting in a permanent scramble for available positions; a scramble in which the Jews, almost entirely concentrated in the middle class, became disproportionately involved. What was more natural than that part of the growing middle class resentment should be turned against the Jewish minority?

What made the problem more acute was that the Jews were not evenly spread over the middle class, but

<sup>1</sup> It is significant that both Edward VII and the Kaiser bestowed the favour of their personal friendship markedly upon Jews.

disproportionately concentrated in certain professions. Small independent enterprises, and trade, the former Jewish stronghold, were steadily being reduced. For social and historical reasons a large sector of the middle class sphere — state and municipal employment, the fighting services, sometimes even employment by great banks and trusts — remained closed against the Jews. As a result the Jews were everywhere forced to concentrate within a narrow range of 'free' professions still open to them in medicine, law, journalism, literature, the arts and sciences, architecture, etc. In the wealthy imperialist countries these Jewish newcomers were absorbed amidst general expansion. But in poor countries like pre-War Austria and Russia, to which the post-War German Republic (not pre-War Germany!) must be added, where the middle class position was unpromising, and competition for middle class positions steadily increasing, the growing concentration of Jews, often foreign immigrant Jews, in medicine, law, journalism, often tending towards Jewish predominance in these professions, produced growing friction—the economic factor behind modern anti-Semitism. What gave this economic rivalry importance was that it could feed on the old anti-Jewish prejudice left over from the Middle Ages, and so create permanent resentment against the Jews.

But, springing from the economic crisis of the middle class, anti-Semitism was only one aspect of a wider mood of middle class discontent and revolutionary outlook. And, just as in the Middle Ages the anti-Jewish riots had accompanied and marked the rise of the medieval nobility to power, in modern capitalist Europe one can trace anti-Semitic agitation growing steadily with the capitalist crisis and the worsening of middle class conditions. The crisis could not be solved by attacks upon the Jews, yet they were everywhere in a minority and unpopular. Movements to achieve temporary relief for the native middle class at the cost of the Jews found immediate response, a response so great that, throughout the last fifty years, the ruling class of finance capitalism has found anti-Semitism a

convenient means for diverting and misleading revolutionary middle class discontent by setting the non-Jewish majority against the Jewish minority—and in this way achieving the enslavement of the middle class and totalitarian rule.

In Hitler's Germany this use of anti-Semitism to break a strong revolutionary movement has been most clearly shown.

So much for the economic factor. But the question still remains : why the Jews ?

In the political and economic stress of to-day minorities everywhere are persecuted ; religious struggles and differences can still play a decisive part. But the question remains : why have the Jews aroused such unflinching, such ubiquitous hostility wherever they are ?

Of course, a great deal can be explained as backwash of the violent anti-Jewish movement of the Middle Ages, which has left its residue of suspicions and hatreds embedded deep in the recesses of the European mind, perpetuated as folk-lore. But even this is not enough. After all, anti-Semitism is not confined to the Hitlers or to the ignorant mobs. In some form or another it is almost universal. And the strange fact is that it is not so much directed against Jews of the Ghetto type as against the assimilated Jews of Western Europe or America, who have identified themselves with their surroundings, who speak the same language, wear the same clothes, have adopted essentially the same outlook as their non-Jewish neighbours. Not only that : the problem of absorbing the Jews has aroused resentment, uneasiness, hostility, even in the most rational circles where mere prejudice should play little part. It is the spread of anti-Semitism which is so amazing. How many Jews are there ? Sixteen million or so altogether. True, distribution is vitally important ; concentrated in the great cities, the Jews form one tenth of the population of the (white) cities over one million. But among the catastrophic changes of to-day should the psychological absorption of this Jewish minority have been so difficult ? It seems to be so. In fact, the modern world can be said

to be Jew-conscious to a fantastic extent. The uncanny aspect of anti-Semitism is its appearance where least expected. There is an astonishingly strong anti-Jewish tinge, for instance, in the most sensitive English post-War literature. Take a gentle pessimist and pacifist like Aldous Huxley, surely remote from Hitler and Streicher's race mania? Yet there is hardly a single book of Aldous Huxley's in which slighting references to Jews are not included. As a puzzled Jewish writer commented:

'Why should Aldous Huxley have Richard Greenow, the hero of the story by that name, remark apropos of nothing at all, that he is quite sure that Jews stink? Mr. Huxley would not defend the thesis; he would not even assert, I suspect, that all the Jews he met, or the majority of them, stank. He is too scientific to believe in the fœtor Judaicus. Or why should the hero, in *Those Barren Leaves*, writing in his office, put down: "Why do I work here? In order that Jewish stockbrokers may exchange their Rovers for Armstrong-Siddelys, buy the latest jazz records and spend the week-end in Brighton?" Why Jewish stockbrokers? It does not appear from the story that the hero would be happy to be exploited by English or French or American stockbrokers.'<sup>1</sup>

Baudelaire wrote his famous poem, which began: 'Une nuit que j'étais près, d'une affreuse Juive . . .' Why 'Juive'? Perhaps it referred to an actual experience, perhaps Baudelaire was merely thinking of his final rhyme: ' . . . dont ma jeunesse se prive.' But Mr. Huxley? He revels in discussing the poem—'Horrible Jewesses, horrible Jewesses!'—as if there could be nothing more loathsome than a Jewess, just as there can be nothing worse than a Jewish stockbroker.

What have the Jews done to Mr. Huxley that he should hate them so gratuitously?

The same holds true of D. H. Lawrence, whose collected letters contain frequent anti-Jewish references, who could write: 'Don't mention Judas. Don't forget he was a Jew, and you're not quite that, yet.' And yet, half a dozen of Lawrence's best-loved friends, quite a disproportionate number, were Jews. So why, why?

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Samuel, *Jews on Approval*, p. 13.

T. S. Eliot, an intellectual Catholic and a profound and sensitive poet, has included an anti-Jewish tinge in his poetry. In one early poem, Burbank with a Baedeker, Bleistein with a Cigar, Bleistein as Jew is put as the opposite of all that is aristocratic, sensitive, true and living art. . . .

‘ But this or such was Bleistein’s way :  
A saggy bending of the knees  
And elbows with the palms turned out,  
Chicago Semite Viennese.  
A lustreless protrusive eye  
Stares from a protozoic slime  
At a perspective of Canaletto.  
The smoky candle end of time  
Declines. On the Rialto once  
The rats are underneath the piles.  
The Jew is underneath the lot.  
Money in furs. The boatman smiles.’

Why ‘ Chicago Semite Viennese ’ ? The Vienna Jews : Hoffmansthal, Freud, Schnitzler, Zweig, Werfel : in artistic creation they can hold their own ! And what does Mr. Eliot think to-day of the Viennese tragedy ? Is he really, really, on the side of Goering ?

Switch over—turn the narrow leaf that divides hatred from love. Take the greatest novelists of our era. Proust : we wander through the great world of France in the perpetual company of the red-haired Jew Swann, viewing it through his eyes. True, Proust was half Jewish. But Joyce, the Irishman, chose the Jew Bloom as chief fantastic figure in his modern Odyssey. Thomas Mann, an arch-German, apart from his frequently expressed admiration for Jews, is now, after Hitler, writing on Jewish Biblical themes. Or, to take a lesser name, Hemingway in his novel *Fiesta* that made him and his writing, chose a Jew as tragic-comic hero, as counterpart victim and final condemnation of empty sensualism. And so on, and so on.

In view of a sentiment so widespread, the question inevitably arises : Is there some peculiar and unique psychological distinction about Jews, all Jews, in spite of their diversity and assimilation, something unmistakably Jewish, and as such at once recognized and disliked ?

At first sight rather the opposite would seem true. A study of individual Jews, or a survey of Jewish talent, reveals not a special Jewish type, but bewildering variety.

To start with the greatest names: Marx, Einstein, Freud. Where do their philosophies not diverge? If psychology be taken, what has the surgical cleanness of Freud in common with the woolly superficialities of Adler? Have the Jews, because culturally foreign, failed to understand European thought, politics, culture? In no way! The German revolutionary movements of the nineteenth century followed the lead of the fiery Jew, Lassalle. A Russian Jew, Trotsky was a key figure in one stage of modern history, and brilliantly successful; a French Jew, Blum, was a dismal, hesitant failure at another stage. Rosa Luxembourg, a Polish Jewess, rose to be one of the only two real working-class leaders Germany has produced in the last eighty years.

And on the other hand (because the legend classing all Jews as revolutionaries is absurdly untrue!) Disraeli, a Jewish convert, became the most brilliant exponent of British Tory imperialism; Stahl, a Jew, was the founder of German conservatism; Preuss, a liberal Jew, drafted the unhappy constitution of the unhappy German Weimar Republic; Rathenau, another Jew, was its most important Liberal Prime Minister, until assassinated. A Jew, Ernst Lissauer, composed the famous Hymn of Hate against England, passionately sung in 1914 by millions of ardent patriotic Germans. And—most grotesque of all—the most merciless, virulent, and brilliant exponent of Germanic anti-Semitism and race-mania was neither Houston Chamberlain the Englishman nor Count Gobineau the Belgian, but Weininger, a young German Jew who, at the age of twenty-one, wrote an ingenious and perverted monograph of hatred<sup>1</sup> against—in that order—women, Jews, and Englishmen, and then sent a bullet through his head. Indeed, one cannot get away from the remarkable Jewish share in *every aspect* of European civilization. In

<sup>1</sup> *Geschlecht und Charakter.*

the Soviet Union Jews have risen to the fore not only as diplomats or administrators but as military leaders and Polar explorers. Gamaruk, Political Commissar of the Red Army, for nearly twenty years fulfilled the same task which Mr. Hore-Belisha has lately taken upon himself, that of—may one say it?—building up a military defence against Hitler. As for Jewish tyrants—there is Yagoda, or rather the late Comrade Yagoda—for ten years the merciless, terror-wielding chief of the G.P.U. It has been reliably stated that Marshal Graziani, the butcher of Lybia and Addis Ababa, is of Jewish extraction.

Leaving politics, the Jews have distinguished themselves so brilliantly in science and medicine that names need not be mentioned; at any rate, many of the most successful and selfless scientific investigators have been Jews. On the stage Jews have been outstanding interpreters, from Rachel, Bernhardt, and Bergner to Chaplin, and—yes!—Fritzi Massary. Modern music—what have the Jews not done for it? Mahler, Schoenberg, Rubinstein, Horowitz, Schnabel, Menuhin, Heifetz, Szigeti, Walter, Kipnis—the list could be continued indefinitely. Heine, a Jew, became the most musical of German lyric poets. In literature men as different as Rilke, Hoffmannsthal, Proust, and Maurois were half Jews.

And so on, and so on. This list could be doubled, trebled. Jewish talent, the Jewish share in European civilization, cannot be questioned. This has to be emphasized, because in the modern anti-Semitic era the notion that there is some fundamental cultural difference between Jews and European culture, perhaps only a subtle difference, but a fundamental one nevertheless, is widely believed—witness the quotations from Huxley, Lawrence, Eliot. But of course the moment one considers this list, the notion cannot be upheld. Deep-rooted European culture? What could be truer to it than Bernhardt's interpretation of Racine, Bergner's *St Joan*, Menuhin's playing of Mozart, Schnabel's interpretation of Bach?

The converse side to this Jewish assimilation into Europe



is, of course, Jewish diversity. When the Jews are roughly called a unit, it is hardly realized how far this process has already gone. Every national only knows his own type of Jew. An Englishman may be adept at picking out a White-chapel or Hampstead Jew in London, but he could not pick out a French Jew in Paris, though again the Frenchman would have no difficulty. An Englishman would hardly recognize some of the lanky young Jews of the very young generation in America or South Africa, and he would have no chance with the sunburned young Palestinian-born Jews. In Tel Aviv, the Jewish melting-pot, with a little experience one has no difficulty in telling different types of Jews—Russian, German, American, Palestinian—with unfailing certainty; simply because not merely in tricks of dress, manner, and speech, but even in expression and, oddly enough, in features, they look unmistakably Russian, German, American, and Palestinian.

All this is true. Modern Jewish diversity is far greater than usually imagined, but it simply cannot hold against the general feeling that, while Jews may differ as individuals, while they differ from country to country, they are somehow at once Jewish in a crowd; a feeling that there is something alike in Jews in a mass, marking them out from non-Jews, a feeling that is shared as much by Jews as by non-Jews.

But this specifically 'Jewish' difference cannot be derived from the present position of the Jews. It can only be sought in what they all have in common—their past. The Ghetto, with its persecution-complex, lies only two, three generations behind the Jews. But in fact one has to go even further. The particular Jewish mentality and culture immobilized in the Ghetto were part of a unique tradition carried almost unchanged from the ancient Middle East.

Freud has shown how important infantile first impressions are for the mental life of a grown man. So with a people. Where the Jews differ is in their first racial memories, their dim memories of earliest totems, taboos, particularly taboos and early repressions. The early Jews had no

bacchanalia. What does this mean? It means that the vital release from the pressure of civilized life, that warm worship of the flesh and the senses, by which the pagan, the Greek, strove for adjustment to life, was unknown to the Jews. While their social and sexual repressions were greater, product of the ancient relentless desert code, Jewish festivals of joy and release were pale and shadowy. In fact, the high Jewish festivals were the opposite—restrictive, stressing the burden upon the individual.

What did this mean? It meant that for the individual Jew there was no release (or far less than for the non-Jew) from that sense of pressure and guilt which is the price paid for over-civilization. It meant more rigid repression, and hence unhappiness, handed on from father to son in an unbroken Jewish family tradition. It meant an unceasing desire for escape, which is the reason why Jews in the mass overdo everything; why, even in their life in Palestine, where they are free from the peculiar anti-Semitic pressure, they still overdo public attitudes; a sudden hysteria of mourning in the case of the funeral, and the next day an equal hysteria of loyalty to some outside cause; why others always feel faintly uncomfortable when in a crowd of Jews. The God of the Semitic Jews never got drunk, never raped beautiful women in the flush of his desire, was never conceived as personification of the desire of warm human flesh breaking through everyday restraint, as the Greeks saw their gods or their bacchanalian holidays. Instead, he was a vengeful and, above all, a possessive and jealous god, jealous even of a poor piece of clay pottery fashioned by the artists in the likeness or imagined likeness of the human form or human desire.

As appropriate to the god of an international merchant people, whose organization, though strengthened by generation after generation, must never be relaxed because of its precarious basis, he manifested himself mainly in countless prohibitions and taboos. Thou shalt not murder, steal, rape, covet other men's wives, go whoring after other gods. Countless taboos.

The Semitic East and Europe. It is in the structure of these taboos and prohibitions, the earliest and therefore the most deep-rooted of all, that Semitic culture differed from that of the younger Europe.

This difference in innermost superstitions and taboos has had its part in shaping Jewish character and Jewish-Gentile relations to this day.

Among the Jews the family plays a much greater part. To the Jewish medieval merchant, perpetually in 'exile,' working in a dangerous if profitable profession, dependent for his existence upon the goodwill of king or noble (based on cash, not on love), the question of a favourite son to carry on his business and his race was vitally important. Jewish society was therefore organized on rigidly patriarchal lines, with sons subordinated to their fathers and prevented from straying from the life planned for them by the irresistible weight of a hardened, intellectual, and prohibitive code added to parental authority. As a result Jews throughout the ages had certain characteristics which made them, as compared to their surroundings, one-sided: they had exceptional intellectual stimulus, a store of swift thought and energy built up through a perpetual fight for self-preservation; great mobility within limits, but very little physical life, very little art, little animal and sensual enjoyment; above all, they were lacking in those necessary festivals or intoxications in which civilized restraints could be thrown aside to give suppressed human desire its chance to break through: and fundamentally, they were an intellectual, strained, unhappy, clamish, and tradition-bound people. When the Jews at last rose up in the nineteenth century and broke out into the world, throwing their antiquated traditions aside, a great deal of this accumulated group strain and unhappiness still clung to them.

But to-day almost all Jews are assimilated, leading modern lives, remote from the ancient East.

And yet their past still holds them, however tenuous the ties. The Ghetto is still close: beyond it the rigid Jewish history is like a long dark tunnel leading from the modern

Jews back into the world of their past. It is the accumulated strain and unhappy burden of this past, meaningless in the present day, which the modern Jews are trying to shake off.

And here perhaps is the only common trait: most modern Jews in Germany, in England, in the United States, are trying to shake something off; they are permanently engaged in an escape from their past, which means, from one part of themselves! This means that they live under greater psychological pressure. If one can generalize at all one can say this: To the modern Jew every side of his life, whether creative work or chase after personal gain, sensual passion or selfless devotion, is *from one aspect* only a means of escape from some other obscure part of himself. That is why the Jew is apt to plunge into every activity in that noisier, more intense, more conscious fashion which, because emotionally different, jars upon his non-Jewish surroundings, grossly in the case of the typical *nouveau riche*, clamorous, unassimilated Jews; subtly, to the utmost degree of subtlety, in other cases.

But to what degree is this psychological friction, this painful if necessary interval of Jewish assimilation—to what degree is it of any importance?

By itself, of very little importance. Modern life is full of far greater strains and stresses. One can agree with Professor Ruppin where he says:

‘National characteristics are variable and not fixed or constant. Should the present state of an urban, capitalist, industrialized and mechanized society continue, mental tendencies now considered Jewish—quickness in thinking, rationalism, *repression of instincts*—may also extend to other nations. It would merely mean that the Jews had been forerunners in a common development. But as the difference between old and young, though of a passing nature, is very real, so is the difference between the Jews and other nations; it affects the social conditions of the Jews and their relations with their neighbours.’<sup>1</sup>

The difference was a passing one only. In times of economic expansion it was of no importance; witness the

<sup>1</sup> *The Jews in the Modern World*, p. 13.

ready acceptance of the Jews in England, France, Germany, and the growing rate of intermarriage. (The number of half and quarter Jews in Greater Germany was in 1933 actually larger than that of the Jews.) But, in times of economic contraction, growing difficulties, and competition, this subtle irritation aroused by the Jews, this residue of former deep dislike and hatred, could—just because of its irrational character—grow out of all proportion and give certain sensitive Jews the feeling that the whole Diaspora was only one vast Ghetto, that they remained ever foreign and unwanted ; in fact, in a trap slowly closing in upon them—so that they frantically searched for a way out. It was out of this perpetual Jewish *malaise* (which sent numerous Jews into the revolutionary ranks) that the Zionist movement was born.

*Part Two*

BACKGROUND TO ZIONISM



## CHAPTER VI

### ZIONISM

**Z**IONISM arose as an attempt to escape from this dilemma and solve the Jewish question by an emigration of the Jews to Palestine where, speaking their own language, Hebrew, they could set up their own state.

Why Palestine? It had never been more than a religious and national centre of the Jews. But Jewish history had been forgotten. The legend that the Jewish Diaspora had begun when the Romans had conquered Palestine and driven out the Jews, who then scattered, had become firmly accepted historical tradition.

Yet there were nearly sixteen million Jews scattered in the world, wealthy and poor, nationally divided, speaking this language or that. Palestine was a small, poor Turkish province, with only a few thousand square miles of cultivable land. The irrationality of Zionism was there from the beginning. How could its first followers, sensible, educated German, Russian, and even English Jews, mostly practical men of affairs, engage in this wild dream of transferring the Jewish millions into this tiny country which, even at the wildest optimism, could never hold more than a small minority of the Jews?

Well, of course, it was never really, or at least never clearly, thought that the Jews could all 'return' to Palestine. The characteristic feature of the Zionist movement was that from its first origins it was confused, and the origins of the confusion go back to the first origins of the movement.

( Zionism had a twofold origin ; a West European and an



East European, a political origin and a messianic. It arose out of the fusion of two separate and very different movements, each with its separate aim.

In Russia, where emancipation and liberalism only stressed the wretchedness of the Jewish plight under the Czar, a Jewish national revival on cultural lines took place in the second half of the nineteenth century. Jewish intellectuals, seeking a cultural background beyond the pettified Jewish religious ritual, yet rebuffed by anti-Semitism prevalent around them, began to turn to the past. Jewish history and Hebrew literature began to be studied, and there was a revival of interest in Palestine, the Jewish Holy Land, now lying derelict and neglected under the Turks. In the 'eighties this interest resulted in a fairly widespread movement, 'The Friends of Zion', which aimed at reviving the historical connection of the Jews with Palestine. The movement was hardly political; its members, intellectual middle class Jews, went little further than collecting funds to found Jewish schools or villages in the country. There was nothing new about this. As religious or cultural centre, Palestine had always featured in Jewish history. Twenty to thirty thousand orthodox Jews already lived in Palestine, mainly in Jerusalem, supported by the donations of pious Jews from all over the world.

After the severe Russian pogroms of 1882, which struck a blow at Jewish emancipation, a number of young intellectual Russian Jews set out for Palestine to devote themselves to simple village life.

Inexperienced as they were, they did not do very well in the arid, inhospitable countryside of Palestine, yet, because of a certain spiritual force behind it, the movement persisted. In Palestine these Jewish pioneer farmers suddenly received help from a very different and very unexpected source.

The stream of Jewish emigrants from Eastern Europe in the 'eighties and the 'nineties had created a dim uneasiness in certain Western Jewish circles, particularly

among the wealthy, westernized, safe Jews of Paris and London. The difference between older Jews and Jewish new-comers never remained very strong; the Jewish communities were growing, inevitably Jewish overcrowding into a few limited occupations was developing, and with it a growth of anti-Jewish feeling. The older-established French and British Jews grew nervous. The notion sprang up that Jewish migration must be guided—mainly away from the existing Jewish sphere; it should be guided geographically, into new countries and into a wider range of occupations. Into agriculture, for instance. Even the idea of a territorial concentration of Jewish emigrants, if a suitable territory could be found, was in the air. Without Jewish nationality, of course: for the Paris and London Jewish bankers stood at the head of their communities, their own civic and social rights as loyal and distinguished (even ennobled) citizens of their countries were beyond question, not to be jeopardized by the dangerous, revolutionary concept of Jewish nationality. It is in the light of this vague uneasiness among Western Jews that the large-scale philanthropic efforts by a group of Anglo-French Jewish millionaires, headed by the Paris Rothschilds and Baron Hirsch, striving to direct Jewish emigration, have to be considered. Through wealthy companies like the Alliance Israelite Universelle, the Jewish Colonization Society, and others, they tried to guide Jewish emigrants to new countries, to provide craft and manual training, and, most important, to found Jewish agricultural colonies in Canada, the Argentine, and, curiously enough, in Palestine. The Argentine and Canadian colonies do not concern us here; as isolated ventures they remained insignificant. But in Palestine, out of vague piety perhaps, or because Jewish farming had already been started, more systematic efforts to colonize were made. The existing, precariously struggling colonies were supported, new emigrants brought over and helped to settle. The philanthropic organizations were wealthy; several million pounds were spent in an extravagant and inefficient way. The results were dis-

appointing. By 1900 a Jewish village population of about 20,000, mostly small planters employing hired Arab labour, had been set up in Palestine. A good deal of land had been bought and, helped by the 'Friends of Zion,' a certain Zionist and Hebrew atmosphere had been created. For Palestine this was all very new and very real. But, during this same period, hundreds of thousands of Jews had emigrated to New York alone, creating new slums and Ghettos. Not even the fringe of the Jewish emigration problem had been touched.

This was the Jewish position at the end of the century. Though the two movements, the cultural Zionism in Eastern Europe, and the attempts of Western Jews to guide Jewish migration, were each a reaction to the growth of anti-Jewish pressure—each an attempt to break through the trap—they differed in their aim and character, and neither had achieved very much.

The two movements, so diverse in their aims, were joined and inextricably confused by a new Jewish messiah, a strange and meteoric figure flashing across Europe of the late nineteenth century.

Theodor Herzl, the Viennese journalist whose picture hangs to-day in thousands of Palestine rooms, was born in 1860 into an assimilated Austrian-Jewish family. Already early in his youth he had gained considerable success as a fashionable Viennese dramatist and critic. He was a striking figure: black-bearded and handsome, dressed always in the height of fashion, gifted with dynamic charm and personality which made him an outstanding figure in Viennese literary life. As correspondent of Vienna's foremost daily newspaper, the *Neue Freie Presse*, he regularly wrote feuilletons and letters of travel, brief sketches, slight, yet always written in faultless style. The best of them, probably, were his faintly melancholy, pensive letters of travel, as, for instance, one written from London (like all Continental snobs, Herzl was a strong Anglophile), a London swathed in autumnal fog whose startling extremes of wealth and darkest squalor stirred sudden pity in him,

moving him to pose the typical question of the wandering dilettante, whether human society could be improved at all, whether the 'outs' would be in any way better than the 'ins' when their turn came.

Posturing a little in *fin-de-siècle* style, staring from his hotel window into the London fog, Herzl wrote how he found the answer in a popular song he had just heard as he left Paris :

‘ La vie est vaine,  
Un peu d’espoir,  
En peu de haine,  
Et puis—bonsoir ! ’

As far as Jewish life was concerned he knew almost nothing. He had received the usual classical German education at school and university. Though he had encountered anti-Semitism here and there, particularly because of his pronounced Jewish looks, his personal charm and intellect had carried him easily over such difficulties and made it a very minor one among the problems of his life.

But in 1894 he was sent by the *Neue Freie Presse* to Paris to report on the Dreyfus trial, that strange portent of the new age in which we live to-day. To Herzl, Paris had hitherto only been the city of Cézanne and Verlaine ; this encounter with anti-Semitism touched him like a stroke of lightning which at once illuminated the hollowness of the emancipated Jewish position. All Europe was only a disguised Ghetto—the Jews were in a trap ! At once, in that same flash of lightning recognition, ignorant of any previous suggestions to this effect, he decided that the Jewish problem could only be solved by gathering the entire Jews of the world into a new Jewish State, and that he, Theodor Herzl, with his feuilletons and his black beard and his silk hat, was the man whom fate had chosen to lead the Jewish people into the new messianic future.

Of course, from this moment on he was a little mad. A month later he began a new voluminous diary with the following words :

‘I have been occupied for some time upon work of immeasurable greatness. I cannot tell to-day whether I shall bring it to a close, but for days and weeks it has filled my mind and even my unconscious thought, it accompanies me wherever I go. . . .’

For the rest of his life, indeed, Herzl was possessed by his demon. With sublime assurance he immediately made contact—naturally—with the great Jewish millionaires and communal leaders, the Rothschilds and Baron Hirsch, demanding their immediate support for his great new idea of the Jewish State. His soaring eloquence gained him an audience. A brand-new Jewish State? Migrations of the Jewish masses under Herzl? Naturally, the Jewish bankers dismissed him casually as a mad visionary.

But this did not deter Herzl. The following year he came out with a pamphlet called *Der Judenstaat*, a fluently written, theoretical explanation of his idea, which brought him into contact with the Russian Zionist movement—to their mutual astonishment; he, in his Vienna drawing-rooms, had been as little aware of their existence, and of the real life of the Jewish masses, as they of his. But within a year, as unquestioned leader, he had organized these Russian idealists into a political World Zionist Organization whose first Congress at Basle in 1897 demanded ‘the creation of a legally recognized National Home for the Jewish people in Palestine’, though Herzl himself was not so particular about the territory. The Congress was solemnly opened by Herzl in silk hat, evening dress, and white gloves, with all the delegates—slightly bewildered middle class Jews from Russia, Austria, and a few from Germany—likewise, at his order, in evening dress, to mark the world-historical importance of the occasion.

The next six or seven years of Herzl’s life were one mad wild-goose chase. At no time had he any real strength behind him. There was something farcical about his pretensions and deceptions. In 1898 he founded a London Bank which was to finance large-scale colonization, the

Jewish Colonial Trust (later Anglo-Palestine Bank), for which he demanded millions in subscriptions, and for which he actually obtained something like £16,000. His Zionist Congress remained the meeting of a small Jewish sect composed mainly of impecunious students. The big moneyed and influential Jews, captains of finance and industry, sitting comfortably in their French chateaux or English country houses, either laughed at his crazy fears of anti-Semitism and his mad visions of a Jewish Palestine, or opposed him violently as a danger to the Jews. The overwhelming majority of the Jews remained entirely indifferent. And yet, completely on his own, Herzl succeeded in conducting the most fantastic direct political negotiations with the Sultan on a basis of complete bluff, promising the Turks the millions of the Jewish millionaires which he had not got, in exchange for Palestine, which the Turks had no intention of giving up, always with a fanatical belief that if he could only achieve the first vital step the rest would be easy. Spurred on by this belief, he managed to interview and interest men like Plohlwe, Russian Foreign Minister, the Grand Duke of Baden, Joseph Chamberlain, who might really have taken up Herzl's idea but for the opposition of English Jews, and even the all-highest, Kaiser Wilhelm himself, whom Herzl caught on the imperial journey to Jerusalem (with great relish, for as a good Austrian patriot Herzl dearly loved royalty).

All these mad journeyings and interviews are recorded in the detailed diaries in which Herzl wrote down in minute detail each daily experience, each new meeting, each thought that occurred to him from 1898 to 1903. This extraordinary document deserves to be better known. Without any real knowledge of the workings of modern society, almost ignorant of Marx, Herzl nevertheless had an uncanny flair for the current historical trend. There is a startling modern ring about some of these extracts, spontaneous ideas casually jotted down. Does the totalitarian State not loom on the horizon in the following extracts?

‘ My Russian Jews, who constitute the great reservoir of unskilled labourers, will be organized as a labour army. Labour to be organized on army lines, perhaps even with uniforms. Labourers are to advance according to skill and seniority. Each carries a marshal’s baton in his knapsack.’

‘ To the Rothschilds :

My view : Socialism is a purely technological problem. The harnessing of natural forces through electricity will solve it. In the meantime our model realm has been created.’

Socialism through electrification ? Shades of Lenin !

‘ To the Kaiser :

If the German Jews emigrate, this will cause the return of the German-American emigrants. In this way you will gain unadulterated nationals, you prevent a collapse which might be difficult to limit, you weaken socialism, to which the persecuted Jews have turned because other parties have expelled them, and you gain time to solve the social question.’

Just as he imagined the Jewish migration as one single, planned, political exodus, so he was convinced of his own unquestioned role of leader.

‘ I need the duel, in order to have proper officers, and in order to refine the tone of good society on the French model.

‘ I shall punish suicide : an unsuccessful attempt by long imprisonment in a lunatic asylum, a successful attempt with refusal of honourable burial.

‘ I shall make our high priests wear imposing ceremonial dress ; and our cuirassiers wear yellow trousers, white tunics ; officers, with silver cuirasses.’

And (mounting *crescendo* ! ) :

‘ My removal from Vienna to Paris was historically necessary so that I might learn the meaning of migration.’

‘ Thought in the Palais Royal during military music (to my subordinates who wish to flatter me) : “ I must not be praised, because I may equally not be criticized. Because I am the leader. . . .”<sup>1</sup> But I say this not only because of discipline, but because my spirit must remain healthy and simple. . . .

<sup>1</sup> In the German original, ‘ Fuehrer ’

‘ I think I shall be remembered amongst the great benefactors of humanity.

‘ Or is this thought already the delusion of grandeur ?

‘ Before anything else I must master myself.

‘ I believe that for me life has ceased, and world history begun.’

Could these last passages not have come out of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* ? But, alas, Herzl was not Hitler ! If all the emotional elements, its confused massed impulse to fight free from the uneasiness in civilization, are stripped from National Socialism, what is Hitler but a symbol with which the German militarist and industrial rulers have crushed the German workers, German democracy, and German socialism ? Whereas Herzl had no such force behind him, indeed, no force at all. In his deluded confidence and self-conceit, rushing frantically across the face of Europe from one prince and foreign minister to the other, hoping for his miracle, Herzl was as much a comic as a tragic figure. He did not even rule his own Russian Zionist followers, even though he had been enthusiastically proclaimed their leader. When in 1903 Chamberlain, interested by Herzl, offered a large area in Uganda for Jewish colonization (not really a very good proposition ; tropical Africa is no white man’s country), Herzl, grasping at what seemed the first result of his political efforts, was not disinclined to accept, only to find that the very suggestion of any other country but Palestine—‘ the historic Jewish homeland ’—raised such a storm of protest among the Zionists that he was almost swept from power. Again, he had rejected the small colonization programme of the Zionists in Palestine as petty and useless, and had jealously guarded all the funds to serve as lever for some grand political *coup* of which he never ceased to hope, but already, four years after the opening Zionist Congress, he was overborne by the majority, and the meagre funds were devoted, as before, to small-scale colonization of a village here and there in Palestine.

When at last, burnt out by his crazy efforts, he died in 1904, still in the early forties, a tired, defeated, and dis-



appointed man, nothing at all seemed to remain of the glittering edifice of political negotiations he had built up. Crazy? Of course he had been crazy. Even the Zionists had as good as rejected him. Yet the immense change he had wrought in Zionism and Jewish life only appeared after his death. He had shouted the idea of Zionism into the world, and there, in spite of the absence of any significant progress, it obstinately remained. With his undeniable political insight, he had created an organization for the Zionist movement which endured. And in spite of themselves, he had swept the bewildered Zionists from their parochial obscurity into the great political world, and there they remained.

The years following Herzl's death actually gave little indication of what was to come. The Turks held out no hopes. Yet Herzl's Zionist movement, the small, scattered groups of his followers which had appeared in each country, held out. Even after Herzl, the irrational touch remained, too. The Zionists for the most part were bourgeois and academic Central European Jews, typical patriotic Jewish citizens of their countries, in whose libraries leather-bound German classics stood next to the newly-translated dramas of Shaw and odd volumes of Judaica. They maintained their organization; they solemnly collected money for the Jewish National Fund; land was bought in Palestine, some schools and small villages founded, one or two exceptionally capable administrators worked hard in Palestine; a new Zionist literature was created. Yet the faith stirred by Herzl was already there: most of the Zionist adherents were certain that these insignificant colonization activities were only the beginning of a movement which would eventually increase a hundredfold. Obstacles, political and economic, would somehow be overcome. The local Arab population of Palestine seemed the least of these obstacles. The Arabs were poor, scattered, inarticulate, the country could be considered as good as empty.

Of course, this bourgeois Zionism was not enough. The

movement would have achieved little in Palestine but for new access of strength from a totally different source.

The Jewish workers in Eastern Europe had also been made aware of the Jewish problem.

In the crowded Russian Pale, at the end of the nineteenth century, capitalism had turned thousands of petty bourgeois Jews into proletarian wage-earners concentrated in the textile, garment, and food trades, which were gaining a name as special Jewish sweated industries.

Being Jews, these workers were a nervous, restless, urban proletariat. Towards the turn of the century class-consciousness in its most militant form swept through them like a flame. For a time a small group of organized Jewish workers formed the spearhead of the Russian trade union movement, and, because the Jews were persecuted like no other people under the Czar, a brilliant group of Russian Jewish revolutionaries arose from the Ghetto.

But it was characteristic that these Jewish revolutionary leaders led the Russian and not the Jewish workers.

The Jewish Trade Union Movement, too, had very soon come up against its limits—and the Jewish problem. Pauperized traders, artisans, and unemployed still made up the majority of the Jewish population. The Jews had entered industry only on the fringe, they were not in the basic industries, but scattered in countless tiny undertakings run by small Jewish employers, who were themselves exploited as much as their workers. Both suffered from the same pressure upon the whole Jewish community. The very successes of Jewish strikers, within the limited sphere, undermined their position, leading to their displacement by the more amenable Russian and Polish peasants who were flocking into the towns; a slow but relentless process causing ever-increasing Jewish mass migration to America.

But what was happening in America? The same concentration and overcrowding of the Jews into the same middle-class occupations and the same few sweated industries in the larger cities. In the East Side of New York,

in the overcrowded Jewish slums, Jewish life seemed to be following the same unhappy development as in Poland. Once again the Jewish workers were found only in small finishing industries, in tailoring, needle-work, etc., and as these were mechanized they were pushed out into an already overcrowded middle class.

What was to be done? Migration or not, the Jewish workers seemed to constitute a mere fringe of the labour movement. In this situation, even among convinced Jewish socialists, unorthodox cries were heard. The Jews, it was suggested, must achieve some territorial concentration before they could ever build up a labour movement.

Already in 1897 a shrewd Russian Jewish socialist in America, N. Syrkin, wrote :

‘To urge the masses to withdraw from this struggle (the class struggle) in the name of Jewish autonomy would be suicidal, spiritually and economically. On the other hand, to ignore the urgency of the Jewish situation in the name of socialism, would be a crime against crucial Jewish needs.

‘The reactionary character of modern Zionism has discredited the conception of the Jewish renaissance in the eyes of Jewish socialists. However—the mistaken belief of some socialists to the contrary—Zionism does not spring from the desire of the Jewish middle class to find new spheres for capitalist exploitation. Such an explanation of this remarkable phenomenon is crude and naïve. Zionism springs from the consciousness of the Jewish masses that their economic positions have been shattered, and from their desire for a more tolerable way of life.’

But the difficulty remained. Zionism was essentially a bourgeois and capitalist movement ; during the colonization stage it had to remain so. How could the actual and psychological gap between this movement and the Jewish workers’ class struggle, part of the revolutionary struggle of the international working class, be bridged?

There was no ready bridge. But for those who were too acutely aware of the Jewish problem, there had to be a solution. And almost at once a Jewish theorist was found to make this attempt.

The career of Ber Borohov, Russian-Jewish theoretician and founder of Socialist Zionism, shows a curious parallelism to that of Herzl, however different the points from which they started. Borohov was a typical Russian-Jewish intellectual, a leading member of the Russian revolutionary socialist movement where—had he not suddenly gone over to the Jews—he might have had a great career.<sup>1</sup>

Borohov was twenty years younger than Herzl. He was born in 1880 in Poltava, a small Russian town with a considerable Jewish population, where both the Russian Social Democrats and the Zionists had passionate adherents. The intensity of the political atmosphere is to-day difficult to imagine. Borohov himself relates how at the age of fifteen he and his Jewish fellow pupils at the Poltava Gymnasium had read right through Marx's *Capital* and discussed it to the last sentence. At eighteen Borohov was the author of several pamphlets on the question of nationalism, and had become the leader of the local revolutionary social democrats. A year later he had rejected the contemporary social democrat position as woefully inadequate to deal with the Jewish problem, and had suddenly left the party to proclaim a doctrine of his own, revolutionary Socialist Zionism, which he defended in a series of brilliant speeches and articles and which at once gained him a following among Jewish youth. In 1906, when he was still only twenty-five, Borohov was presiding at an All-Russian Congress of Socialist Zionists when the Russian political police attempted to arrest him as a dangerous revolutionary, and he only just succeeded in escaping abroad. But his leadership of his party continued and, by 1914, working mainly from America, ceaselessly organizing and writing, he had turned his Socialist Zionists into something like a world-wide movement among Left-minded and socialist Jews.

<sup>1</sup> And possibly ended, like so many others, before the shooting-squad. But there can be no question of Borohov's exceptional ability. His writings, particularly on the national issue, are far superior to those, for instance, of Zinoviev, another Russian-Jewish intellectual, whose one-track doctrinaire mind carried him as far as the Presidency of the Communist International.

What, in brief, was his doctrine ?

Borohov always disdained to join Herzl's bourgeois Zionists, and to the end considered himself a revolutionary socialist. But because the Jewish working masses were either declassed and rootless petty bourgeoisie or else concentrated not in large basic industries but only in the last stages of production, notoriously the weakest industries, he claimed that the Jewish workers, harassed in an anti-Semitic world and always under double pressure, could never build up a real socialist movement. The Jewish workers lacked any strategic basis for the class struggle. What was to be done, therefore ? As first step a basis must be created by suitable territorial concentration of the Jews so that the Jewish masses could for once form the broad basis of the social pyramid, not merely an abnormal layer. But how could a revolutionary socialist be content to take part in what must obviously be a capitalist organization movement ? Borohov leapt this hurdle without hesitation by defining this colonization movement as an elementary and inevitable process. The capitalist crisis was at hand, the economic system was cracking up, and it was the fate of all Jews, as universal minority, to be the first victims. But this economic exclusion affected the Jewish middle class as much as the Jewish workers ; both must therefore strive for territorial concentration. Unchangeable historical reasons had made Palestine this territory. Modern Zionism was therefore no artificial bourgeois illusion, as the ordinary socialist alleged, but something which was inevitable and elementary. The Jewish middle class would bring its capital to develop the country, thereby creating a demand for Jewish workers ; there would be a double migration, and then at last, with a real basis from which to work, the Jewish working masses, the most revolutionary in the world, would achieve their aim and establish a Jewish Socialist Republic in Palestine.

Borohov's theory was constructed with great ingenuity and plausibility ; he himself completely believed in it. As late as March 1917 he could still write :

'It is as good as certain that the British will have enough time to conquer Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia before the Hohenzollerns, Hapsburgs, and Young Turks will be dethroned by revolution, and, should this happen, then with mathematical exactness the Jewish republic in Palestine will come into existence.'

He wrote this shortly before his death in Russia in the summer of 1917, an early death, like Herzl's, mainly due to over-exhaustion. And at the time of his death he already knew better.

What is to be said of his theory?

First of all, it was based on a partial truth. The Jewish problem in capitalist Europe was only part of the whole capitalist contradiction, and in particular of the slow destruction of the free independent middle class, and it could finally only be solved as part of the greater problem, whether in Europe or in Palestine. At the same time, there was the special interim problem of the elimination and oppression of the Jews. Borohov was far too great a realist not to see that, particularly as far as the Jews were concerned, social democracy was a sorry self-deception, and, like many other Russian socialists, he had little belief that revolutionary communism could succeed in the backward countries of Eastern Europe.

So he spun his own messianic illusion: the Jewish Socialist Republic in Palestine; a solution which his Russian colleagues no longer needed after the Soviet revolution proclaimed full equality for Russian Jews; a solution which could only have come about if Palestine had not been part of the Arab world and a focus of British imperial interests, but an abstract country, a country on the moon!

How far did Borohov really believe in his hopes as the decisive moment approached? It is difficult to say. He died in 1917, on the brink of the new world which was coming into shape.

But, illusion or not, like Herzl, Borohov, with his Socialist Zionist theories, had helped to inculcate a new ideal

among Jews, which—under the steady growth of anti-Jewish pressure—endured and found fanatical adherents. In the year following the failure of the Russian revolutionary rising of 1905, with its aftermath of deliberately staged pogroms, more than a thousand young Jewish intellectuals and students, socialists as well as Zionists, left their homes in Russia to become simple labourers in Palestine. They were little concerned with Borohov's revolutionary Zionist rationalizations; they simply considered themselves the advance guard of the Jewish working class in Palestine. In Palestine they formed a compact movement; untrained, unprepared as they were, the task of learning to live as rough village labourers demanded most of their strength, and the Jewish 'return to nature' and 'conquest of working class positions' became the central points of their philosophy. The difficulties facing them seemed immense. They were inexperienced, the climate and conditions of the work were exhausting; the villages had few amenities, and the Jewish colonists, already become typical planters employing cheap Arab labour, met the new-comers, who preached the principles of Jewish labour and nationalism, with the utmost hostility. But the young labour Zionists overcame all these obstacles. The strength of their impetus was that of Russian revolutionary ardour as much as of Jewish nationalism. Throughout difficulties and tribulations, they never for a moment abandoned their vital principles: that a Jewish state in Palestine was needed, but that it must be one based on a Jewish working class and on co-operation, that the Jews would be regenerated through working class life in Palestine. Their own work and struggle as hired labourers and watchmen in the Jewish colonies was a necessary starting-point. It was their own certainty about this future which helped this small band of young Jews to endure. Before them a Jewish agricultural labourer was something that hardly existed. But in a few years, living in collective groups, in poverty shared with absolute equality, working for wages as low as the Arab fellah, they had gained a foothold in the Jewish

colonies, and with the help of the Zionist Organization established a number of collective farms of their own. But the life of labourers in Palestine was hard ; the struggle for existence remained always doubtful. With all their optimism this band of Russian Jewish revolutionists could hardly have dreamed of the startling developments which would follow. With their wild Russian appearance and their communal life, these Russian Jewish workers would have been strange figures anywhere. They were strangest of all in Palestine, an Oriental country of rock and burning sun, poor Arab fellaheen, corrupt Arab effendis, and Turkish governors.

But during the last pre-War years the whole Zionist movement gathered impetus. Money was steadily collected in the Diaspora, workers and middle class Jews immigrated into Palestine ; there was a small boom in orange-growing ; schools, villages, even a small Jewish seaside town, Tel Aviv, sprang up. Together with the growth in numbers, a definite Zionist atmosphere gained ground. The Hebrew language made progress ; the various Jewish sections, planters, workers, older religious Jews, became fused into a definite national unit. The characteristic quality of Zionism, that mixture of exaltation and calm practicability, was already there. But as nationalism united the Palestine Jews, they were sharply brought up against a parallel nationalist movement among the Palestine branch of the people who had scarcely figured in ancient history, but now occupied the Middle East—the Arabs.



## CHAPTER VII

### THEORIES ABOUT THE ARABS

**T**HIS history is concerned with the Jews and their Zionist venture in Palestine ; the Arabs enter only as a background, and little need be said about them. The writer is no Orientalist and speaks no Arabic ; his personal acquaintance extends only to westernized Arabs. Yet he has been puzzled and intrigued by the strange 'otherness' of Arab life and thought, and the mystery of Arab rise and fall, which all the standard works on the Arabs take for granted rather than explain.

'A first difficulty of the Arab Movement,' Lawrence begins the second chapter of his saga, 'was to say who the Arabs were. Being a manufactured people, their name had been changing in sense slowly year by year. Once it meant an Arabian. There was a country called Arabia ; but this was nothing to the point. There was a language called Arabic ; and in it lay the test.'

But there is also the point of common origin. What is one to say about the Arabs, this nation of roaming Beduin, veiled women, dark men in tarbooshes endlessly sitting in their cafés, except that they are strangers ?

Their whole civilization was strange ; not part of our European civilization, but parallel to it. During the early Middle Ages they were a great ruling people of warriors, merchants, scientists, astronomers, poets ; in wealth and civilization the Middle East and North Africa were at least level with Europe, and probably greater in population. To-day, in a sparse, sandy region, only small Arab groups are struggling towards westernization and fifth-rate nationhood ; around stretches a desert of stagnant Arab decay,

crumbling, filthy little Arab towns, where fitful dark eyes stare at one from drawn, fanatical Arab faces.

The reasons which caused this disintegration into nothing of the parallel Arab civilization are still a mystery. Looking back from the viewpoint of to-day, with present methods of historical analysis, one may perhaps *begin* to understand.

Like the Arabs, the early Jews were a Semitic people ; and Jewish history seems to show that the clues to the pattern of Semitic history can be found in the social and family (i.e. sexual) structure of Semitic society. The pattern of Jewish and Arab history shows certain curious parallels. The fluctuations of this history were extreme. The extreme downfall of the Jews from the great trading and banking people of Europe to the despised, intellectually-perverted outcasts of the Ghetto has already been described. So with the Arabs. For a short while they were the greatest imperial ruling nation ; but when they crashed it was into slavery. When the Turkish Empire crumbled in the nineteenth century, the despised Greeks and savage Balkan nations had the strength to revolt ; but the proud Arabs remained inert and powerless, caught in their own rigid decadence.

There are other parallels and divergences. Like the Jews, the Arabs are one of the Semitic peoples who emerged from the great desert reservoir, but unlike the Jews they played only an insignificant role in ancient history (because still at the nomadic stage), and they were the last Semitic nation to appear upon the Middle Eastern scene. There are other differences. The Jews, as an international community, represented a trading people typical of one phase of Middle Eastern history. Arab civilization remained in many essentials based upon a nomad background. And while the Jewish spread was a slow trading expansion extending over nearly two hundred years, Arab expansion was like a flood which in one fierce rush poured round half the shores of the Mediterranean and to the Indus and the borders of China, and with almost equal swiftness subsided again.

True, in the centuries preceding Islam the Arabs, nomads

and merchants alike, had been spreading from Arabia into the surrounding fertile lands, yet there was something irrational, almost magical, in this astounding conquest, in Mahomet's spiritual and political leadership and the growth of Islam, beginning as a small Arab tribal affray between the fourth-rate towns of Mecca and Medina, and within one lifetime turned into an inspired movement which had conquered half the known world.

How can one explain the magical rise of Mahomet? Not through his spiritual message alone, which was little more than a desert Arab's garbled vision of Christianity and Judaism. One might ask to-day: How can one explain the rise of Hitler from his Munich beer-cellar to domination over Europe? Not by his national-socialist creed; we are, to-day, no longer so innocent. Modern knowledge reveals the mechanism of society, and Hitler as instrument. When in 1929-30 world capitalism had reached the greatest crisis of its history, Germany, with its five million unemployed, seemed the next country after Russia heading for revolution and communism. Hitler, with his crazy movement, became without knowing it the spearhead of a world capitalist counter-revolution to smash working class organizations, put the unemployed into new military uniforms, and divided the world between new, more ruthless finance-capitalist empires. History has its iron logic. At every new step he took Hitler had the active or tacit support not only of the German industrial rulers who first financed his brownshirt army, but (behind the democratic trappings) of the whole international finance capitalism, from Hoarst to Rothermere or Franco, whose battle he fought against humanity. That his craziness spread and that he turned from instrument to a monstrous Frankenstein, is another matter. And so, similarly, the writer feels, with Mahomet, Islam, and Arab military conquest, only this time in the opposite, that is progressive, direction. The stage was set. The centralized power of the vast Persian and Byzantine empires, degenerate, ruled by military despots and financial oligarchs, exhausted by endless rapacious wars, hated by

crushed subject populations, had become the only obstacles to international economic progress and expansion. It only needed a single military jolt and a hope of greater liberty, and the two hollow imperial structures would collapse. Arab military conquest supplied the initial jolt, Islam the hope ; that the Arabs were frequently accepted without resistance as liberators was half the secret of their swift progress. Particularly, the Mediterranean merchant class stood almost at once on their side.

This was the background of the Arab rush : two outworn empires, ready to fall. While the causes for the sudden emergence of the Arabs are not easily explained, it is clear that Islam conquered as much by its religious faith—behind which stood its social ideal—as by the power of the Arab sword. The social code of the Arabs was still largely based on a nomad background. In the desert, where necessities such as food and water were so rare that no man might accumulate them, primitive democracy and elements of communism survived to this day as the only possible social organization whereby man might live. The early ascetism of Islam certainly derived from this source. The social order the Arabs spread from the desert was freer than the neighbouring despotisms. To the rotten empires of Byzantium and Persia, with their vast slavery, their rule of urban rich, corrupt Oriental sloth and wealthy parasitic churches, Islam opposed its fresh monotheism from the desert (unlimited, as opposed to the national monotheism of the Jews), with its code of tolerance even for slaves, and, above all, its formal equality of all believers. Islam won all along the line. In the writer's view Arab progress should be considered as a social revolution spreading round the Mediterranean as much as a conquest by desert warriors.

As a result, the first period of Arab rule, before the victorious Arabs had themselves stooped to exploitation, passed over the Mediterranean like a great wave of liberation, before which petty frontiers and tyrannies vanished, commerce and industries revived and flourished, and a new progressive merchant class in a chain of cities reaching from

Cordova to Samarkand initiated an age of intense intellectual activity, in its universality unprecedented in the ancient world, in which Greek, Roman, and Semitic thought were gathered together again, and in which, it should be noted, members of other nations and other religions, Christians and Jews particularly, were in the first phase of tolerance permitted to play a leading part.

The Arab rush as spearhead of a successful social revolution in the Middle East, the overthrow of outworn despotism, and a great unification of commerce and civilization : The view is speculative, but to the writer seems the clue to the unique Arab rush from desert to world rule.

The almost equally swift decline of the Arab world is easier to understand. Spread over a vast empire, the nomad aristocrats were too few, their communications too tenuous. In the Middle Eastern centre, the hub of the empire, the world of flesh, that ancient Asiatic corruption and decadence which had dominated the centres of wealth from the time of Babylon and Susa, closed in again, until the Arab capitals of Baghdad and Cairo were no more than its heirs. When this world crashed before devastating raiders, Arab civilization, too, fell with little resistance, and became subject to the Mongols and Turks. The great Arab rush had done its work, and left as its heritage the Arabic language spoken from North Africa to the Persian Gulf, and an Arab population as final occupants of most of the Middle East. But, under Turkish domination, the Arabs sank in every way to a subject population. Separated from Europe, cut off from the new trade-routes, the Middle East fell into decay ; its cities crumbled ; most of its population was turned into abject fellaheen.

But there was something so swift and so extreme in the Arab collapse from shining civilization to helplessness, indifference and degradation, as to distinguish it from that of any rise and fall of any nation in Europe. The social system, and particularly the sexual and family aspects of Arab culture, must surely have played their part in shaping Arab history. The Semitic Arabs had passed almost

at once from the nomad to the ruling stage ; in spite of all civilization, they had little administrative talent (they relied largely upon non-Arabs for administration), and they remained rootless. And the exaggerated sexual element which became at once fused with their conquest and religion, their idealization of the subjection of women into mere instruments of male delight and procreation, was as if they cut off one side of human life and shrouded it amidst mysteries of night and darkness, and created a purely male and only adolescent world, confused, unstable, and dream-like, ready to collapse. The first overthrow of Arab power caused Arab spiritual collapse. This reaction, exactly like that of the Jews during the same centuries (1300-1800), was a supreme surrender to unhappiness, helplessness, and fatalism ; and at the same time a neurotic clutching at unreal compensation. As with the Jews in the Ghetto, memory of past greatness became not a spur towards recovery, but an end in itself.

As Lawrence shrewdly wrote :

‘ With the coming of the Turks, this happiness became a dream. By stages the Arabs, the Semites of Asia passed under their yoke, and found it a slow death. Their goods were stripped from them, and their spirits shrivelled in the numbing breath of a military government.’

Slow death : like the lingering of a neurotic, turning away from reality as only solution of a conflict too great to be faced. Like the Semitic Jews in the European Ghetto, the Semitic Arabs under the Turks found shadowy compensation in an infinite elaboration of orthodox Islam. Lawrence continues :

‘ They (the Arabs) lost their geographic sense, and their racial and historical memories ; but they clung the more tightly to their language and erected it almost into a fatherland of its own. The first duty of every Moslem was to study the Koran, the sacred book of Islam, and incidentally the greatest Arab literary monument. The knowledge of his religion was his own, and that only he was perfectly qualified to understand and practise it, gave every Arab a standard by which to judge the banal achievements of the Turk.’

For four hundred years the Arabs steadily sank deeper into their living death of indifference, poverty, and decline. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, as Turkish military power disintegrated, Egypt broke away, the Greeks regained independence, and after them, step by step, the Serb, Bulgar, and Albanian peasant nations fought savage wars to gain their independence. Only the wide Arab world, held fast in its neurosis of subjection, seemed to lie fallow and inert ; the small Arab ruling class, remote and hating its peasant masses, was engaged in cultured decadence, internal struggle, or nothing at all. Yet, as trade between Europe and the East increasingly stirred the Arab countries living midway along the route, Western ideas also penetrated, and even the frozen Arab world was forced into life. Commerce and industry grew up along the fringe of Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia, creating a new mercantile Arab middle class which made its presence felt in a sudden growth of Arab nationalism aiming at liberation from the Turkish yoke. Yet the process was painful, convulsive, slower than anywhere else. Economically Arab society had stood still at the early feudal stage, and the mass of the fellaheen, brutish, servile, and inarticulate, remained indifferent. The social paralysis of Arab society remained untouched. Arab progress and westernization had to struggle against the crushing dead-weight of neurotic religious orthodoxy. Arab nationalism therefore lacked all solidity and moved among unrealities. There was a considerable literary and cultural revival, culminating in the study of Arab history and art at the academies of Cairo, Damascus, and Baghdad ; but this nationalism was apt to lose itself in a confused dreamland of pan-Arab or even pan-Islamic movements. Beyond this, there were only vague secret societies and military conspiracies without further programme. When the revolution of the Young Turks caused Arab nationalism to flare suddenly into life in 1907, it was dashed down ruthlessly and easily by the more efficient Turks, because it lacked all mass support. With the War, however, though not the

Arabs of Syria and Mesopotamia but those of the Arabian Desert revolted, the whole Arab people, nomads, peasantry and townsmen alike, were violently shaken, started at last upon a nationalist movement which is still growing to-day.

But the Palestine Arabs, the poorest, least educated and least considered Arabs before the War, took little part in this nationalist stirring. Only Zionism itself gave them the start, at once teaching them new methods and presenting vulnerable points against which they could rally and struggle.



## CHAPTER VIII

### BRITISH POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

NAVAL supremacy built the British Empire. The nineteenth century is generally thought of as the age of imperialism, but this is wrong ; the real struggle for Empire was decided in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries when Britain, through her favoured island position, emerged victorious from lengthy naval wars in which British sailors, with nothing of the muddle-through about them, unconscious even that this would ever describe British policy, sailed the seven seas, plundering the crumbling Spanish Empire, having the best of it in the end, after stormy Channel battles, with sturdy Dutch, beating the French irresistibly out of the field, sailing the coasts of America and Africa and Asia, discovering Australia and New Zealand. After the control of the seas was achieved, the task of building up colonies was easy ; not much more than a matter of occupation.

At the same time this world-wide British Colonial Empire has never remained fixed, but continually changed in importance and geographical composition with the needs of the mother country, that is, with the needs of British industry and finance.

The most important change took place in the nineteenth century.

At the end of the eighteenth century, even after the loss of the American colonies, Britain's chief overseas interests still bordered on the Atlantic Ocean. Australia was desert, the rubber empire of Malaya did not exist, China was closed territory. Canada and the West Indies and the crumbling

remnants of Spanish empire and trade were the chief colonial prizes. Though Britain had wrested India from its French colonizers, its exploitation had hardly begun, and all shipping still passed along the Atlantic route round the Cape.

In the summer of 1937 a leading British statesman (it might have been Sir Samuel Hoare) said plaintively: 'If only a giant airship could lift the British Isles bodily and transport them to the centre of the Indian Ocean, away from Europe, how much more peacefully and safely we could live!'

Britain, to-day, is essentially an Indian Ocean Empire. While the Atlantic possessions have dwindled in importance or become—inevitably—satellites of the United States, the wealthiest British Colonies and Dominions, South and East Africa, Aden, India, Burma and Ceylon, the Malay States with Singapore as gateway to Australia, New Zealand and China, are grouped like a wreath round the Indian Ocean.

This gradual shift of British Imperialism from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean has proceeded from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present day, and, inevitably, because of their key position half-way between Britain and India, the sandy, sparsely populated Arab countries of the Middle East, Palestine included, came into the orbit of British imperial interests. To-day, with the life-line of British communications so suddenly and so unexpectedly challenged, they have become the vital key-point.

Already Napoleon, in his typical crazy venture into Egypt and Palestine—on the right lines, but just a hundred years too early—had shown the British where their nerve-centre might lie. But his attack failed, like his other attempts at world domination.

After Nelson's victories of the Nile and Trafalgar, Britain, holding Gibraltar and Malta, emerged in 1815 in virtual control of the Mediterranean, which endured for exactly one hundred and twenty years until 1935, when Mussolini

challenged it. Then it fell with a crash which startled Britain and the world.

The whole history of the Mediterranean zone during the nineteenth century is one of steady colonial penetration by Britain and France, tied in a curious and unstable union, at once mistrustful allies and jealous rivals.

Britain, out to safeguard imperial communications, naturally took the leading part. France's position was only secondary. In West Africa she was building up a new smaller colonial empire, to replace the one lost to Britain ; but in the strategic Eastern Mediterranean her policy was mainly defensive ; to prevent Britain from achieving complete monopoly and to keep any other country out of second place ; and this policy France has maintained consistently, from Talleyrand and Napoleon III to Laval and Blum.

For the first half of the nineteenth century co-operation predominated over rivalry in Anglo-French relations. The joint programme was to turn the Mediterranean into a closed Anglo-French lake ; to this end one blow after the other was struck. Turkish sea power was broken in 1828 by the destruction of the Turkish fleet at Sansovino. Two years later, when Mehemet Ali, that able adventurer on the Egyptian throne, tried to add Palestine to Egypt, it was made clear to him by overwhelming British and French military force that there was to be no real revival of Egyptian independence. A third danger was removed in 1854-5, when a mixed British and French army fought an unfortunate, bloody, but finally successful war to prevent Russian expansion into the Mediterranean.)

This war, which saw horrible slaughter and disease, the Charge of the Light Brigade, Florence Nightingale, also saw a small force of Sardinians and Piedmontese added to the British-French forces. Nobody would have thought that eighty years later this force would have grown into a military power strong enough to challenge a British-French alliance.

With Turkey and Egypt powerless, Russia kept out, and

the field therefore quite clear, the next fifty years were characterized by Anglo-French rivalry rather than co-operation.

Already in 1856, scarcely a year after the Crimean War, British interests launched a scheme of a 'Syrian Trans-Desert Railway Company,' which was to link the Mediterranean with Baghdad and the Persian Gulf, as rival scheme against the simultaneous French preparations for a canal at Suez. The two schemes were pressed upon the Turkish Government in open competition. The Indian Mutiny, causing the British plan to be temporarily suspended, gave France her opportunity to drive a sharp wedge into the British sphere. When the Suez Canal, a triumph of French engineering, was opened in 1869, it was as a predominantly French enterprise, and at the opening ceremony ships of all nations, British ships included, followed in the wake of Napoleon III's yacht.

But the new Napoleonic expansion of the French Empire was as brief as it was insecure. Already two years after the Suez triumph France was utterly defeated and crushed by Germany, and for at least ten years was unable to hold her own in the imperialist struggle. The flowery antics of the Jewish Prime Minister of Britain, Disraeli, the fact even that British expansion was opposed by considerable political interests at home, only hide the relentless swiftness with which British strategy exploited its opportunity. In 1875, during temporary financial difficulties of the Khedive, the Egyptian controlling interest in the Suez Canal shares was snapped up by Disraeli. In 1878 Britain occupied Cyprus, and the same year Disraeli thought another Russian attempt upon Constantinople sufficient reason to threaten war, and brought back Peace with Honour from Berlin. In 1882, on the pretext of quelling disturbances, British troops landed at Alexandria and 'occupied' Egypt. In ten years British control of the Eastern Mediterranean had become a *fait accompli*. By the time that France, weakened, deprived of Alsace-Lorraine, had recovered from the blow of 1871, she had to

accept the situation. In return for a guarantee to Britain for a free hand in Egypt, she received similar guarantees for Morocco ; and co-operation, though with a difference, could now be resumed.

With the British occupation of Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, and Egypt in turn, the strategic protection of the route to India was almost secured. Only one gap remained, on the second side of the Suez Canal—Palestine, the Holy Land.

British interest in Palestine was of old standing :

‘As long ago as 1840 Lord Shaftesbury had proposed a scheme of Jewish colonization under international guarantee as a means of using the wealth and industry of the Jewish people for the economic development of a backward area. George Eliot and Lawrence Oliphant had clearly stated and warmly advocated the Zionist ideal. Among English Jews its most prominent champions had been the young Disraeli and Sir Moses Montefiore. But the British Government was not in a position to force Zionism on the Sultan.’<sup>1</sup>

No, not as long as Palestine remained a Turkish and not a British possession.

It was, amongst other points, on the question of the control of Palestine and its hinterland, dominating the projected Berlin—Constantinople—Aleppo—Baghdad railway, that the challenge of German imperialism to the British Empire was issued.

General Smuts, in less idealist terms than those quoted above, wrote plainly in 1916 that of the four British aims two were :

‘The destruction of the German colonial system with a view to the future security of all communications vital to the British Empire. This has already been done (an achievement of enormous value which ought not to be endangered at the peace negotiations.

Tearing off from the Turkish Empire all parts that may afford Germany opportunities of expansion to the Far East, and of endangering our position as an Asiatic power. This has essentially been achieved, though the *additional conquest of Palestine* may be necessary to complete this task.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Peel Report*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted, Lloyd George, *Memoirs*, p. 1531-2.

During the critical stage of the War the British made every conceivable effort to derive advantages from local popular movements in the struggle for this area.

Already several years before the War, British agents had established contact with anti-Turkish Arab nationalist circles in Syria and Mesopotamia as counterweight to the Turkish-German alliance. During the War these contacts proved of the highest importance :

‘ Two dangers were at once apparent to the Allied Powers. Syria and Palestine might be made the base for a Turco-German attack on the Suez Canal ; and the prestige of the Caliphate might be used in an attempt to raise all Islam against the Allies in a Jihad or Holy War. To meet the first danger troops were concentrated in Egypt. To meet the second, negotiations were opened with Hussein, Sherif and Emir of Mecca and hereditary guardian of the Moslem Holy Places of Mecca and Medina. Hussein and his people had long cherished similar ideas of throwing off the Turkish yoke to those of the Syrian nationalists, and it was intimated to him that his participation in the War on the Allies’ side might lead to that result.’<sup>1</sup>

As a result of these intimations King Hussein prepared for revolt. In September 1916, after the British failure at Gallipoli, it was urgent that an Arab anti-Turkish revolt should break out on a large scale to redress the balance. At the same time—even at doubtful moments of the War—British politicians looked ahead, to safeguard British interests if this Arab revolt should be successful. A new large Arab state should be created, freed from the Turkish yoke, but in turn dependent upon British protection and support. The chief of the British Staff in Egypt, General MacMahon, therefore proposed the following bargain to King Hussein :

‘ The districts of Mersina and Alexandretta and the portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs Hama and Aleppo cannot be said to be purely Arab, and should be excluded from the proposed limits and boundaries. With the above modifications, and without prejudice to our existing

<sup>1</sup>. *Peel Report*, p. 16.

treaties with Arab chiefs, we accept these limits and boundaries, and *in regard to those portions of the territories therein in which Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interests of her ally, France*, I am empowered in the name of the Government of Great Britain to give the following assurances and make the following reply to your letter :

“ Subject to the above modifications, Great Britain is prepared to recognize and support the independence of the Arabs within the territories included in the limits and boundaries proposed by the Sherif of Mecca. Great Britain will guarantee the Holy Places against all external aggression, and will recognize their inviolability.

“ When the situation admits, Great Britain will give to the Arabs her advice, and will assist them to establish what may appear to be the most suitable forms of government in those various territories.

“ On the other hand, it is understood that the Arabs have decided to seek the advice and guidance of Great Britain only, and that such European advisers and officials as may be required for the formation of a sound form of administration will be British.”

Largely upon the stimulus of this promise, and the hope for Arab revival, an Arab revolt was declared in Mecca, and some thousands of Arab warriors enlisted under Lawrence, harassed far superior Turkish forces for two years, and finally participated in the capture of Damascus after one of the most amazing of guerilla campaigns.

The italics in the above quotations are from the *Peel Report*. Well might these reservations be stressed ! The Arab countries were not Britain's to give away, and it was known in 1916 both in London and in the East that the terms of the treaty with Hussein would prove unacceptable to France. So what was to be done ? Lest the fires of Arab revolt be damped (and they had offers from German agents too !) the real agreement between Britain and France about dividing the Middle East after the War (known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement) was kept secret, and might never have been published had not the Bolsheviks given it full publicity, after discovering a draft copy in the archives of the Russian Foreign Office in 1917. By this overriding agreement, of the territories just promised to the Arabs,

Northern Iraq and Syria were to remain under French control, Southern Iraq and the Haifa district under Britain. Italy, an inconvenient third partner also clamouring for spoils, was to be compensated with parts of the coast of Asia Minor, while the Holy Places of Christendom in Southern Palestine were to come under an international Anglo-French-Italian administration.

‘It was in ignorance of any other compact than the McMahon Pledge that the Sherif declared war against the Turks.’<sup>1</sup>

But this was not the end of British pledges. The war in Palestine, where 80,000 Jews lived behind the Turkish lines, but were nationally and spiritually linked with world Jewry, brought the British in touch with that strange movement, Zionism.

Zionism itself had in the meantime become a movement of quite other and larger dimensions. Hundreds of thousands of impoverished uprooted Jews on the East European front had suddenly become a vast army of possible adherents. On the other side, Turkey’s entry into the War and the imminent possibility of a British conquest of Palestine, opened up startling new prospects. The Zionist leadership, which had kept remarkably well organized, decided to gamble on a victory for the Allied Powers. The Zionists were exceptionally fortunate in the personality of their representative in London, Chaim Weizman, a brilliant Russian-Jewish chemist naturalized in England, whose inventions for the manufacture of cordite explosive had proved quite exceptionally valuable to the British Admiralty and had given him access to the inner circle of British statesmen. Weizman, less brilliant and imaginative than Herzl, his predecessor, but smoother, calm with a Russian shrewdness and persistence, succeeded in convincing men like Balfour, Sykes, and Smuts of the value of possible world Jewish support and the value of Jewish claims to Palestine.

For over a year the British Cabinet weighed these claims in the balance. Was possible Jewish support to the

<sup>1</sup> *Peel Report*, p. 21.



Allied cause worth a third bargain which—since it would have to be publicly proclaimed—would cut across the promises already given to the Arabs?

Here is the *Peel Report's* description of Lloyd George's own evidence, given twenty years after the event.

' Like the MacMahon Pledge, the Balfour Declaration was not an expression of a wholly new sentiment. Just as British public opinion had sympathised before the War with the victims of the old Ottoman regime, so it has sympathized with the victims of anti-Semitic persecution. But in both cases the time and manner in which these sympathies were translated into action were determined by the exigencies of the War. In the evidence he gave before us Mr. Lloyd George, who was Prime Minister at the time, stated that, while the Zionist cause had been widely supported in Britain and America before November 1917, the launching of the Balfour Declaration at that time was "due to propagandist reasons"; and he outlined the serious position in which the Allied and Associated Powers then were. The Roumanians had been crushed. The Russian Army was demoralized. The French Army was unable at the moment to take the offensive on a large scale. The Italians had sustained a great defeat at Caporetto. Millions of tons of British shipping had been sunk by German submarines. No American divisions were yet available in the trenches. In this critical situation it was believed that Jewish sympathy or the reverse would make a substantial difference one way or the other to the Allied cause. In particular, Jewish sympathy would confirm the support of American Jewry, and would make it more difficult for Germany to reduce her military commitments and improve her economic position on the Eastern front.'

The text of this 'Balfour Declaration,' which would make it more difficult for Germany to reduce her military commitments on the Eastern front and strengthen the pro-British elements in America (it seems that, like most people, the British Government vastly over-estimated the influence of that mythical body, International Jewry), ran as follows:)

(His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement

<sup>1</sup> *Peel Report*, p. 23.

of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.'

The ambiguity in the phrasing is at once apparent. As Vincent Sheean, the American author, wrote :

'The master-hand of Balfour never did better work than in the rubbery phrases of this sentence. The whole tone of the sentence was one of generosity to both Jew and Arab. The Balfour Declaration seemed to promise the Jews everything, and at the same time to reserve everything for the Arabs, at one time and with one twist of the pen.'<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the Declaration did its work because world Jewry, as far as it was influenced by Zionism, rallied to the British and Allied cause.

What were the ambiguous words, 'the establishment in Palestine of a National Home,' adhered to against the urgent Zionist demand for 'Palestine as the National Home,' really intended to mean ?

The *Peel Report* threw new light on this question :

'We have been permitted to examine the records . . . and it is clear to us that the words "the establishment in Palestine of a Jewish National Home" were the outcome of a compromise between those Ministers who favoured the ultimate establishment of a Jewish state and those who did not.'<sup>2</sup>

But if the British Cabinet had not decided about a Jewish state in Palestine, leading British statesmen nevertheless gave exactly that impression to the outside world :

( 'General Smuts, who had been a member of the Imperial War Cabinet when the Declaration was published, speaking at Johannesburg, foretold an increasing stream of Jewish immigration, and in generations to come a great Jewish state arising there once more. Lord Robert Cecil in 1917, Sir Herbert Samuel in 1919, and Mr. Winston Churchill in 1920, spoke or wrote in terms that could only mean that they contemplated the eventual establishment of a Jewish state.'<sup>3</sup> )

<sup>1</sup> *In Search of History*, p. 376.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. who favoured an Arab state or a plain British colony (*Peel Report*, p. 24).

<sup>3</sup> *Peel Report*, p. 25.

To the Zionist leaders in London the Declaration had come as a disappointment after a period of wild hope, but since they had no choice, they had to accept it with a show of enthusiasm. To inform world Jewry, millions of copies of the Balfour Declaration were circulated throughout the Jewish communities, being dropped from the air on German and Austrian towns, and passed throughout the Ghettoes of Eastern Europe.

The immediate result was the recruiting of several Jewish volunteer battalions from America which served as auxiliaries on the Palestine front. The 'rich Jewish bankers' of New York may have done their share in swinging over American opinion still more to the Allied cause. But in Eastern Europe, among the millions of wretched Jews in Poland and Russia, the Balfour Declaration came like news of a great miracle. Britain, the greatest power in the world, had promised Palestine to the Jews; redemption, if not at hand, had at least become possible. Thousands of fervent young Jews, ready for sacrifice, flocked into the Zionist ranks. In Palestine itself the Jewish population behind the Turkish lines went right over to the British side, providing Allenby with his best intelligence service.

Slowly the balance of the War had been shifting in favour of the Allies. In the first days of November 1917, enjoying a two-to-one numerical and material advantage over his Turkish opponents, Allenby struck the first blow of a brilliant campaign which was to free all Palestine, and took Jerusalem, thus achieving a strategic British occupation already planned by British policy long before the War.

But out of respect for the holy city of Christ the Redeemer, Allenby did not ride into Jerusalem at the head of his composite British-Arab-Jewish army, but entered on foot.

## CHAPTER IX

### POST-MORTEM

THE British victory on the Palestine front was the first of a series which signalized the break-up of the Central Powers and the end of the four years of horrible struggle. But at the beginning of the Peace, which was to make the world safe for democracy, the few idealists here and there found themselves lost in a fierce general scramble for the spoils.

IN March 1920 three men, who had already met once before in the Transjordan desert—the Emir Feisul of Mecca, Chaim Weizman, the Anglo-Russian Zionist, and T. E. Lawrence, acting as intermediary, met again at a hotel in London to draft a Jewish-Arab Treaty, and discuss what was to happen in Palestine.

It was a strange meeting, typical of this period of idealist confusion, strange because of the utterly different personalities of the three men taking part in it.

First, Weizman, a Russian Jew, equally shrewd and successful as scientist and as politician, with his personal charm, his suave cosmopolitan manner, and his inside knowledge of British politics. Next, Lawrence, a twisted, tortured English individualist from Oxford and Egypt, who had led the Arab revolt and who had written :

‘ Though my sight was sharp, I never saw men’s features ;  
always I peered beyond, imagining a spirit reality of this or  
that.’

And :

‘ I was a standing court-martial of myself, because to me  
the inner springs of action were bare with the knowledge of  
exploited chance.’

And :

‘ As for honour, had I not lost that a year ago when I assured the Arabs that England kept her plighted word ? ’

And lastly Feisul, handsome, aloof, straight and slender as an arrow, a desert Arab who had shown great powers of leadership, and had co-operated with Europeans and yet remained essentially a ruler of desert nomads, and as such an alien, unpredictable and remote even from the Levantine Arabs of the Mediterranean cities.

Feisul had been brought to Weizman by Lawrence, who was anxiously trying to save what could still be saved from the wreck of Arab independence. Feisul agreed that if the Arabs received the large independent state promised by MacMahon, containing Mecca, Baghdad, and Damascus, he, the Emir Feisul, would, in the name of the Arabs, concede full colonization rights in Palestine to the Jews. In return, presumably, the Jews would afford the Arab state that financial assistance of which it would be in obvious need.

This is the only case of a Jewish-Arab agreement ever signed.

The terms of the agreement have historical interest, but are not significant. What was significant about the meeting was not how strong, but how weak each of the three protagonists really was.

In 1920 Lawrence had already nothing but a faded vision in which his confidence was fast crumbling.

Feisul had only his small force of half-armed Arabs, nothing else to oppose to the big imperialist armies.

Weizman was perhaps the strongest. He had not money, but a chance of obtaining money, and with money on a considerable scale a great deal could be done in the modern world.

Yet the meeting was romantic enough, and so was the visionary design for the Middle East in the minds of the three men : a large new Arab state, thinly populated, primitive, and poor, yet a rich field for the Arab renaissance,

arising side by side with a new Jewish republic on European lines in Palestine.

Even that curious, apologetic summing-up of imperialism, the *Peel Report*, admits at a safe distance of years :

‘ If Feisul’s hopes had been fulfilled the development of the situation in Palestine might have been completed more peacefully than it has been.’<sup>1</sup>

The failure of this vision was—that it was not of this world ! It left out of account the aims of the two imperialist powers, who had fought the greatest of all wars partly for possession of this strategic area.

In fact, in 1919–20 there were no less than *cight* competing factions represented in the struggle for power in the Middle East. Mainly, of course, it was a British affair, but British political opinion, foreshadowing British post-War hesitancy, was already divided into two sections.

The out-and-out imperialists, represented by the Colonial Office and the military authorities in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Palestine, wished to utilize Arab nationalism to weld the Middle East into a large federal Arab state under British control, a new India of the Middle East, which, however, implied the elimination of the French from Syria and the Zionists from Palestine.

But the majority of British conservative and moderate opinion, afraid of such large new commitments, was in favour of co-operation with France and on a small scale with the Zionists, and of rule through that Anglo-French institution to safeguard war gains on liberal lines, the League of Nations and its mandates.

Britain’s first allies, the Arab Nationalists led by Feisul and his brother Abdullah, still hoped for the fulfilment of the British promise of Arab independence. At the same time Britain’s other allies, the European Zionists, were straining every nerve to obtain that international recognition of their efforts in Palestine which the British War Cabinet had promised them and which they in turn had promised the Jews of Eastern Europe.

<sup>1</sup> *Peel Report*, p. 27.

But, opposed to extreme British aims and Britain's Arab and Jewish allies, there stood post-War France, victorious and armed to the teeth, a power which had promised nothing to the Arabs and, on the contrary, claimed *La Syrie Integrale*, that is, the whole of Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, as her share of the spoils.

There were the Italians, whom the Sykes-Picot Agreement had promised the Smyrna Coast and a share in the International Administration of the 'Holy Places' of Palestine.

Even the U.S.A. had their interest in Palestine. It has been forgotten to-day that in 1919 President Wilson sent two special American emissaries, a Mr. King and a Mr. Crane, to Palestine, to discover the wishes of the local population in accordance with that principle of self-determination which, in his short post-War year of illusion, he was trying to impose upon an unwilling, hostile, and armed set of victors.

Eighth and last there were the twelve million inhabitants of the Middle East, predominantly Arab-speaking, overwhelmingly poor peasants and nomads, with few articulate political wishes, almost yet no longer wholly unaware of the political bargaining that was going on over their heads, expressing their awakened discontent in primitive rioting.

And yet a great deal of this confusion was more apparent than real. By 1920 it was already clear that there were two strategic objectives in the Middle East; the great Mosul oil-fields and the military protection of the Suez Canal. And there was the rivalry of two great powers, Britain and France, for these two points. Everything else, all the promises that had been made to small peoples and interests, were not much more than play.

Events moved very fast to show up this reality. The year 1919 and the early part of 1920 were still a period of post-War optimism. A Zionist mission, composed of several distinguished English Jews, went to Palestine to discuss the first steps for Jewish colonization in the country.

Zionist headquarters in London launched an appeal for funds in order to finance the immediate mass migration of hundreds of thousands of Jews apparently waiting in Eastern Europe.

Parallel to this effort, early in 1920 Feisul, with the support of the anti-French minority among British imperialists, had himself enthusiastically proclaimed ruler of Syria in Damascus. At the same time his younger brother, Abdullah, was appointed by the British at Baghdad as ruler of a new state, Iraq (Mesopotamia), which contained the Mosul oil-fields in its northern provinces. The Arab nationalists had certain hopes of joining these two countries, and if this had only been possible, even under virtual British rule, at least one reasonable Arab state of six or seven million inhabitants and with large natural resources and strategic frontiers, stretching from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, would have come into existence.

A year later, like other post-War hopes, the whole dream had collapsed. Left by the British to his own resources, Feisul had faced a powerful French army which had marched upon Damascus and had been driven in flight from the country. Arab rebellion in northern Iraq and Arab riots in Palestine were, after unexpected difficulties, put down by the British. At the same time the British military authorities in Palestine had refused recognition to the Zionist Mission, and Zionist hopes were nearly shattered.

A year later all these difficulties had been ironed out, and the situation in the Middle East had been settled by the British and French Governments, and the settlement confirmed by the newly-established League of Nations.

It was a typical post-War settlement. Promises were not actually broken, but only a minimum of each promise was fulfilled, and the essential balance of British and French rule was secured.

To compensate the Arabs for the debacle of Damascus, Feisul was put on the throne of Baghdad as ruler of Arab Iraq under a British League of Nations Mandate. Mosul,



with its oil-fields and great air-base, remained virtually British property. Syria, in exchange, was retained by the French under a similar mandate, and administered from Damascus and Beirut. Palestine, including Haifa, was left under a different British mandate. Jewish colonization to form a 'National Home' was permitted on a limited scale, but the Zionist Organization enjoyed no special status, and there was no question of an autonomous Jewish state. The country would be neither Arab nor Jewish, but administered by Britain in the interests of all its Moslem, Christian, and Jewish communities, and in the interests of the whole Christian world. Finally, in Arabia, Britain's former allies were set up as insecure rulers over the Arab tribes.

The promises to Italy—who had been guaranteed the Greek coast of Asia Minor and a share in a joint rule in Palestine—were simply disregarded, because France and Britain considered Italy too weak for effective protest, with the result of perpetuating an Italian sense of grievance, which went far to consolidate a Fascist regime and brought its due consequence in 1935.

But for the British in Palestine there still remained the local problem created by the contradictory promises of nominal independence for the Arab population and the promise to Zionism embodied in the Balfour Declaration.

A first step towards a convenient solution was found. In view of the opposition the present 'Partition of Palestine' has aroused, it should be remembered that this expedient has already once been successfully applied.

Palestine was divided. The larger section east of the Jordan, an almost empty territory facing the desert, inhabited by 300,000 poor Beduin and peasants, was separated from the more densely inhabited Mediterranean section, and declared an 'autonomous' Arab State of Transjordan, outside the scope of the Balfour Declaration, with Abdullah, Feisul's brother, as 'King.'

This separation achieved three results. The Zionist experiment would be confined to a smaller and much more

populated area, and would therefore obviously be confined to narrow limits. At the same time it could not be said that Britain's promise to the Jewish people had not been upheld. Arab nationalism in Palestine and Transjordan was weakened and split because it could now be claimed, with Abdullah's connivance—his first appearance in this role—that Arab claims of self-government had been satisfied. Lastly, and here British strategic interests were upheld, an important British-controlled buffer State had been created, which would remain largely undeveloped, a convenient exercise and landing-ground for the Royal Air Force.

British expectations have been fulfilled; for twenty years Transjordan has remained empty and poor, its population ruthlessly kept down.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of 1921, less than two years after he had brought Feisul and Weizman together to draw up their Arab-Zionist treaty, T. E. Lawrence took part in another meeting, where he acted again as intermediary between an Arab prince and a Jew, but this time it was a very different occasion.

It was at Amman, at the official inauguration of the new Arab State of Transjordan, attended by Abdullah, the new ruler, and by Herbert Samuel, the Anglo-Jewish High Commissioner of Palestine.

The historic meeting was caught in the photograph reproduced on Plate V. Lawrence, Herbert Samuel, and Abdullah are shown side by side. In the picture Herbert Samuel looks a little exotic in his white sun helmet, and

<sup>1</sup> In British political circles opposed to Zionism Transjordan has often been cited as a success, enjoying unbroken peace in contrast with the unceasing conflict and bloodshed brought by Zionism to Western Palestine. Few descriptions could be more ironical. The total budget of Transjordan is still only £300,000. Here are three selected items:

Upkeep of Abdullah and his retinue . . . . .	£15,000
Police and prisons . . . . .	£112,000
Public Health Services (for population of 270,000)	£14,000

Or else, per head of population, just over 1s. spent annually on health services, 1s. 1d. to maintain a British puppet ruler, and 9s. to maintain an enforced police rule.

not entirely at ease. He had good reason. He must have known that by cutting off Transjordan from Palestine all chances of Jewish colonization on a really large scale were ended. Abdullah, clasping his hands, is also seen peering rather doubtfully at the camera. He knew there was little behind the pomp of the occasion; for the sake of an empty honour and a few thousand a year he had split the Nationalist movement of the Arabs of Palestine. Lawrence, nervously wringing his hands, looks the most uncomfortable, and so with reason! This was the final step in the cutting up of the Arab countries, nullifying the hopes of a united Arab renaissance, which he had once held out to the Arab leaders.

It was time he disappeared from the Middle Eastern scene.

*Part Three*

WHAT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE



## CHAPTER X

### BRITAIN AND THE NATIONAL HOME

**J**EWISH history and the political background to Zionism have been dealt with in some detail, not because Zionism is to be regarded as the culmination of Jewish history, but, on the contrary, in order to understand how so strange an illusion could have arisen among a people as rational and intelligent as the Jews.

The present section is concerned with the fate of the Zionist experiment in post-War Palestine. Palestine is a very small country ; its modern history is brief ; many of its problems have been insignificant, those of a minor British colony. Quite another scale, therefore, must be applied to the events in this section.

Just before the War Palestine had reached a greater prosperity than it had enjoyed for many hundreds of years.

The fortunes spent in the country by the colonization societies headed by Baron Rothschild had been managed wastefully enough. Nevertheless, in the end they had stirred Palestine to new life.

In 1914 the Jewish community numbered about 80,000, of whom about a quarter lived in agricultural colonies on a total area of 700,000 dunam (1 acre equals 4 metric dunam), that is, about one-fifth of the total cultivated area of Palestine. In the Jaffa district oranges and vines were cultivated with considerable success. Tel Aviv, the Jewish suburb of Jaffa, had grown into an independent town of nearly 5,000 inhabitants.

A good part of the Jewish investment had passed to the Arabs in the form of wages, payments for agricultural

produce, and for land, and had thus quickened the whole economic life of the country.

Norman Bentwich, later to be Attorney-General of Palestine, wrote in 1914:

‘ I spent a few weeks in the Jewish settlements early in the summer of 1914, and shared in the general conviction that a bright era of progress was opening. The atmosphere of the colonies was full of plans for the purchase of lands to increase the Jewish agricultural area, and lay out fresh garden suburbs. . . . There was a promise of something of a Palestine boom.’

In the summer of 1914 there was a comparative economic boom in Europe too. But Britain and Germany clashed, not only in France but also in Palestine. During the War, which turned Palestine into a battlefield, for which both the British and German general staffs had laid their plans, most of its prosperity was destroyed.

The ill-equipped, hungry Turkish forces which held Palestine from 1914 to 1917 fed upon the country, utterly denuding it, chopping up even olive and orange trees for firewood. The population was decimated by hunger and disease, and the Jewish community, distrusted by the Turks, was particularly persecuted and reduced by wholesale expulsions in which thousands were involved.

Palestine was a poor, battered and denuded country when the British took over in 1918, and the population, Arabs, Christians, Jews, exchanged a decadent imperial master for an up-to-date one.

The immediate results of the British occupation were those initial benefits that always go with imperialist rule.

A typical British colonial administration was set up. Senior British officials arrived, subordinates were recruited from among pro-British elements in the country. British troops kept order, and a British judiciary was set up and immediately began to function. Trunk roads were built, the railway system restored, and a skeleton system of Government departments dealing with health, education, public works, customs was established.

It was all on a modest scale ; Palestine was a small

colonial country, and a poor one. Yet the fact that not a Colonial Office administrator, but Sir Herbert Samuel, an Anglo-Jew and a leading British politician, should have been appointed the first High Commissioner after the military administration, showed that Palestine was something new in the framework of the British colonial empire.

First, though a poor country held for strategic reasons and without economic value, it was the 'Holy Land.' As such it would perpetually be in the news; any event happening in Palestine would automatically have magnified importance. Palestine was also unique in its mixed population and social problems. The Palestine Arabs were ordinary enough, an unwilling colonial people. But side by side with them there were the Zionist Jews, European in origin and outlook, out to found a 'National Home' on European conceptions.

Almost from the beginning, beside the British Administration, two shadow governments were set up. The Palestine Arab nationalists, though weak, had been aroused, and did not surrender their claim for independence. A nationalist leadership had emerged, ruling Palestine Arab life from the national aspect. And the Zionists, regarding Palestine with the unshakable auto-suggestion of faith as theirs to colonize, looked to the Zionist Executive in Jerusalem as governing body in all Jewish and Zionist matters, and immediately began to develop their own cultural and economic administrative autonomy.

Stereotyped British officials, Jewish intellectuals from Eastern Europe, primitive and fanatical Arab nationalists—it was difficult to see how any unity between the three forces could arise.

The contradictions in the situation were well expressed in the character of the three men whose personalities dominated Palestine during the first phase. Two were Jews, one an Arab.

Chaim Weizman, the Zionist leader, was born in 1876 in Pinsk, a Russian-Jewish Ghetto town, into a typical poverty-stricken, swarming Jewish family. His rise, too,



was typical of so many young Jews from Eastern Europe. In the 'nineties he was studying chemistry at German universities. He met Herzl, and at once became a convinced Zionist. In 1902, at twenty-six, he had become reader in chemistry at Manchester University. Some years later he successfully changed over to industrial research, and patented certain biochemic processes which made him comparatively wealthy. At the outbreak of war—he had become a naturalized British subject—this scientific research took him to the Admiralty laboratories, where his inventions for the manufacture of cordite explosive made him, a Russian Jew, one of the most successful British war scientists. During all his years in England he had remained an ardent Zionist, making a number of converts among previously sceptical English Jews. After Herzl's death in 1904 Weizman had gradually taken over the leadership of the movement. During the War his personal contact with leading British politicians placed him in a unique position of which he made the fullest use—for the movement and for himself. Through personal advocacy during the critical stage of the War he persuaded men like Lloyd George, Balfour, and Smuts of the value of an alliance, through Zionism, with 'World Jewry,' and the early publication of the Balfour Declaration was largely due to his personal efforts. At the end of the War he was almost unanimously elected as President of the enlarged World Zionist Organization, and except for one formal break he has occupied this position, the highest in Jewry, up to the present day.

What sort of man is Weizman? In his personal appearance he is pronouncedly Russian with a Tartar touch; some of his photographs show a marked likeness to Lenin. But Weizman is essentially the opposite of the lean and fanatical Jewish revolutionaries and intellectuals of Eastern Europe. Emotionally he is still as much a Russian as a Jew, least of all an Englishman, yet he has become pleasantly smooth and anglicized, managing his scientific research with considerable business ability, owning a house

in London, moving with great ease in the important political world.

He is enigmatic ; he has worked almost wholly through his personality, which has influenced men as diverse as Balfour, Feisul, and Blum. His speeches and writings are polished rather than striking, but his personal charm and persuasiveness have again and again proved their effect. Through his outstanding political position he was compelled to be continuously in the limelight, moving in the strange world of high political negotiations, among those other actors, Lloyd George, Balfour, Smuts, all the great political figures of his day. To succeed amongst them, Weizman has had to be at once a Jewish mass politician, and utterly aloof, and in his double role he has been entirely successful. Throughout the last twenty years he has acted as intermediary between the British Government and the Jews, and he has gained the respect of the former and kept the scattered and unruly Zionists together in one single mass movement, in spite of the passionate and often unreal dissensions throughout their ranks. With British politicians he has always been a man of the world, presenting the struggle in Palestine as one of civilization against the desert, which was, alas, not very helpful ; nor could he help his followers in Palestine, much smaller men, to smooth Jewish-Arab relations as he had done with British-Jewish relations in London. It was always in Jerusalem that Zionist policy was inefficient and blundering.

How does Weizman view the Jewish future in Palestine ? He has been attacked by the Jewish ' Left ' as a mere British imperialist tool, but this is utterly absurd. Like the whole Jewish problem, like the Jewish people with its little-formed class distinctions, like the whole Jewish nationalism he has led, he escapes strict classification. (That is why so many Marxist or Communist accusations against Zionism are so much irrelevant.) Zionism has been a movement of the small Jewish middle class, fluid, capable of taking on any form, and through his grasp of

this fact coupled with his political instinct, Weizman has unfailingly understood how to emphasize common British and Jewish interests in the Middle East. He understood Zionism as clearly as he understood British policy ; he knew that the strength of the movement derived from the Jewish masses, not from the Jewish leaders, and even from the messianic irrationality of its appeal.

All his life he has not feared to take a political gamble. In 1921, when a split occurred between the European Zionist masses and the wealthy American Jews, he threw his influence unhesitatingly against the latter, trying to build the movement with no more than the support of the Jewish masses and his own connection with the British Government. He has guarded the latter carefully, confident that he only could do this work he had chosen. This has made his life a solitary one, but politically he has always remained flexible and on the alert. Though he is no socialist himself, he has always supported the Jewish organized workers of Palestine against their employers. He is no chauvinist ; he would have preferred negotiations with the Arabs, but he had to realize that his followers were against this. To-day, in his sixties, he is more than ever established as intermediary between the British Government and the Jews. But his influence is to-day greater in London and New York than in the new Palestine which is growing up. How does he visualize the future of Palestine ? It is difficult to know. But for forty years, while he has been a solitary and skilful politician, he has been faithful with a simple Russian tenacity to his Zionist ideal and those poor East European Jewish masses amongst whom he has long ceased to live.

That Weizman's opposite, the first British representative in Palestine, should also have been a Jew was one of history's ironies.

Lloyd George's appointment of Herbert Samuel to be first British High Commissioner of Palestine was one of the great Welshman's cleverest moves.

Before the War Herbert Samuel, a member of a well-known Jewish banking family, had been one of the bright hopes of the Liberal Party, and during the War he had risen to Cabinet rank as Home Secretary.

He was a typical upper-class English Jew ; invariably correct, ambitious as politician, over-conscious of his Jewishness, and anxious to stress this as mere formality. At the Home Office during the War he was correct and successful, showing no leniency towards any co-religionists from the Continent classified as undesirable aliens. When the War was over he seemed destined to become Lloyd George's rival and successor as leader of the Liberal Party.

It was then that Lloyd George invited him, as a Liberal and a Jew, to become the first High Commissioner of Palestine and its Jewish National Home, and Samuel, making an irretrievable mistake, accepted the appointment.

There was a stroke of genius about Lloyd George's move : it caught Herbert Samuel in his one vulnerable point, in his Jewishness, that double existence from which no Jew can free himself.

In Palestine, as a British politician and a Jew, Samuel was put into an impossible position. To use his whole influence as High Commissioner for furthering the cause of his fellow-Jews (and his help in the first critical years could have been invaluable to the Zionists) might have given him a new name and reputation, but it would have meant the end of his career as an impartial British politician.

On the other hand, to be a Jewish High Commissioner of Palestine and stand aloof from the Jewish cause because of fears for his political career—well, there would be something rather negative and ignominious about this, both in British and Jewish eyes.

Knowing his man, Lloyd George must have had little doubt which course Samuel would choose.

Herbert Samuel was as ambitious as he was careful. Throughout his life he had put his career as British politician before any other attachment. He chose the same course in Palestine. No non-Jew, no tradition-bound

official from the Colonial Office, could have ruled Palestine with a stricter regard for purely British interests, reducing Zionist aspirations to the desirable minimum and safeguarding the administration of the country. Indeed, Samuel was over-correct ; in every doubtful case his verdict was given against the Zionists.<sup>1</sup> Of course, Samuel could not emerge from his dilemma, and did equal harm to himself and to the Zionists. Before his term in Palestine he had been regarded as brilliant and promising. He returned with a reputation as a cautious and safe man, and was immediately put into another platitudinous and meaningless position as Chairman of the Royal Commission on the Coal Industry.

He never recovered his initiative. He remained colourless and eminently safe, and though he was afforded one more brief spell as Cabinet Minister in 1931, it was little more than a stratagem to bring the Liberal voters into the fold of the ' National ' Government.

Only in 1935, when there was little further hope for his own political career, and when the Hitler persecutions in Germany must have shaken his composure, did Samuel openly go over to the Jewish side in protesting against British inactivity during the 1936 disturbances in Palestine. But by then it was too late. As the new Viscount Samuel of Mount Carmel and Toxteth (the unconscious irony of his title !) his political career had definitely failed, and he had little influence in either British or Jewish affairs.

The third outstanding figure in Palestine politics was a Palestinian Arab.

Haj Amin el Husseini is typical of his age. Lawrence, perpetually wavering between his own acute realism and romantic illusion, miscalculated. With the one exception, under unique conditions, of Ibn Saud, it is not the Arab

<sup>1</sup> The most glaring instance of this was the case of the Beisan lands, a large state domain, which might have afforded ample scope for Jewish colonization but which Samuel handed over to certain Arabs with doubtful property rights who had little intention of settling themselves, and in the end sold most of the land back to the Zionists at considerable profit.

princelings who have played the decisive role in the post-War Middle East, but men rising from the people, like Kemal Ataturk, Zaghlul in Egypt, Suleiman Bekr in Iraq, Ali Reza Shah in Persia.

Haj Amin el Husseini, ex-Mufti of Jerusalem, in spite of bogus claims to ancient nobility, also comes from a *thoroughly bourgeois and parvenu Levantine family*, the Husseinis, who had become the most powerful and wealthy among the leading Arab families under the Turks. His rise to power was swift. In the War he was a British agent ; immediately afterwards he threw himself into nationalist agitation, at once gaining some influence, but in 1920 he was still only a young political agitator, notorious for the flaming red colour of his beard, and his extreme views. For a time, though he always had his supporters among British officials, he even figured on the Government black list. In 1922, however, though coming only fourth in the elections held for these posts, he was appointed by the British as Mufti of Jerusalem and President of the Supreme Moslem Council, controlling Moslem religious courts and charitable institutions.

The purpose of the British officials who persuaded Herbert Samuel to make this choice was fairly clear, and in keeping with British colonial practice in the quieter pre-War days. They had quickly realized Haj Amin's ability, and the dangers he could create ; by putting him into an official position his ambitions were met, he would be working as salaried official of the British instead of underground, and he could be used to guide the Arabs and as counterweight to Zionist penetration.

Because the Mufti has recently been so much in the news as rebel against British authority, it should be emphasized that his position was created by the British, and that for the greater part of his long term of office he was undoubtedly an agent of the British Government. That he was at the same time the Arab nationalist leader did not matter. Individual British interests in the Middle East were complex, even conflicting ; only the general pattern was

consistent. The Mufti's activities seemed to confuse the Pan-Arab movement by introducing the religious rather than the territorial touch ; they created a focal point of Arab nationalism in Jerusalem, a British garrisoned town, a potential counter to Damascus, Baghdad, and Rhiad.

What was not foreseen—and this is hinted at in the *Peel Report*—was the steady growth of Arab nationalism all through the Middle East, the strong position which the Mufti, thanks to the Zionists, was able to build up for himself in Palestine, and finally that Haj Amin's Arab patriotism was genuine enough to turn him even against his British supporters and paymasters when he thought it in Arab interests. It was not till 1936 that he did this, at a time when British weakness in the Mediterranean was so startlingly revealed in the Middle East ; and one reason for the notorious leniency extended to his rebellion for nearly two years was that his friends among the British officials were desperately slow to become convinced of his change of policy, as of other unpleasant facts around them.

What sort of man is this leader of the Palestine Arabs ?

The Mufti is a Levantine Arab, and his world is a strange one, half-way between the medieval Arab mind and the post-War capitalist world with its stresses and cheap catch-phrases.

In Palestine he found himself opposed by the Zionists, ultra-modern in some respects, with a tremendous social and technical superiority over the ill-organized Arabs. Through his position as Mufti of Jerusalem he found himself the leader of the opposition movement of the Palestine Arabs. How should such a movement of resistance be organized ? Here Haj Amin has been a typical Arab and a typical Levantine. As politician and intriguer he proved himself a past master. He knew how to rouse the Arab masses through incitement to religious fanaticism, and, equally, how to flatter the British and utilize their prejudices. Making the utmost use of the considerable funds at his disposal for political ends, he gradually ousted all other Arab leaders and built himself an unassailable position,

almost a 'government within a government', over the Arab population. After 1930, as the new educated Arab youth appeared on the political scene, he knew how to keep up with their new outlook, which tended towards imitation of the Fascist youth movements, storm troops, and armed risings of Europe. He swiftly became an adept at building up and encouraging underground insurrectionist activities ; he was also quick to learn the full value of the publicity he enjoyed and kept Arab attention permanently concentrated on the Palestine scene. At the same time he is unquestionably a national leader, and his regard for Arab national aspirations is as genuine and ardent as his personal ambition.

But beyond this ? The mass of the Arabs were at the end of his rule exactly what they had been at the beginning ; desperately poor, ignorant, caught in the coils of the local moneylenders. But Haj Amin has never, in speech or writing, given the slightest hint that, to him, Arab nationalism goes beyond the snatching of power by the limited ruling caste to which he belongs ; beyond a few platitudes he has no social programme whatsoever. It is here that for all his suave polish and persuasive powers, he is really far more primitive and savage than the men who led the European national uprisings of the last century. More than this, he is a national leader at the stage of history when nationalist movements have been transformed to serve reactionary and obscurantist trends, and this fits in with his own outlook ; he and General Franco could excellently understand each other. There is another difference. Already before his national movement could mature it was caught up in the contemporary struggle of imperial interests, tainted, distorted, swept into the Fascist wave. For the same reason his particular power was rather hollow. In 1936 he gambled daringly on a British-Italian war in ordering an armed rising for an independent Arab Palestine. It was a bad miscalculation because his support among anti-Jewish British officials was so strong that lesser concessions could easily have been obtained ; but



he had gone too far, and in 1937 even the Palestine Government lost its patience, dismissed him, and forced him to leave the country.

He may return, of course, particularly if Partition is carried through. But it would be a sorry, reactionary, national, and fascist-minded Arab state which would be headed by him.

But the Mufti's prominence and the rise of Arab nationalism only came later. For the first five or six years after 1920 the history of Palestine was mainly that of the Jewish National Home and the fluctuations of World Zionism.

During the first two years after the Armistice the Zionist atmosphere was one of reckless optimism, in keeping with the general political spirit of the time. How much had really been accomplished? In the background there was a certain doubt, yet it seemed as if in connection with the British victory and the Balfour Declaration a miracle had happened and a Jewish state in Palestine become a practical possibility. Circumstances were exceptionally favourable. In Eastern Europe hundreds of thousands of Jews, uprooted and rendered destitute through war, dislocation, and famine, were suddenly converted to the idea of emigration—even to Palestine. In Palestine itself, under the British regime, immediate colonization seemed possible. And the War had brought the wealthy American Jews into contact with Europe and awakened their sympathies; they seemed ready to co-operate; in European eyes their funds seemed unlimited. In 1920, therefore, when the new Executive of the World Zionist Organization met in London, it was in an atmosphere of justified optimism. As far as men and money were concerned, the Jewish people seemed ready to become Zionist. But there was little time, results would count, actual work must immediately be started! In Jewish tradition, two funds, to be financed by donations, were set up, one of which was to deal exclusively with purchasing land in Palestine 'as inalienable property of the Jewish people,' the second for all the other needs of migration and colonization; a general budget was fixed

at twenty-five million pounds to be raised and expended within five years ; and a call sent out for Jewish pioneers for the first rough tasks of road-making, amelioration, agricultural colonization, etc.

At the same time the first colonization area in Palestine, the Valley of Jezreel, was bought from its owners, a wealthy Syrian family, for £700,000, a fantastic price for Palestine.

The Valley of Jezreel, covering an area of about fifty square miles, was the largest cultivable and uninhabited area available. It was uninhabited for good reasons. Through centuries of neglect it had become marshy and malarial, a dismal stretch of waste land, deserted by cultivators, including even those hardy colonists, the German Templars. Waste lands had been drained and rendered fertile before, but the Zionists were facing this task with practically no technical knowledge, only a handful of trained workers lost among the mass of raw immigrants, and yet they had to make an immediate start with colonization. It was clear that only exceptional ardour and self-sacrificing spirit could overcome these difficulties. These were obtained !

The War was not yet over. At Versailles peace had been signed, but in Eastern Europe national and civil war, with their aftermath of collapse, starvation, and pogroms, continued intermittently for three chaotic years. The Jews, in keeping with their long tradition of persecution, were among the worst sufferers ; untold thousands were killed in pogroms in the Ukraine by the White Russian armies fighting against the Soviets ; masses of refugees crowded the few spots of safety. Where the Red armies came they brought temporary respite, but in a starving country-side, where the Jewish majority was immediately declassed as bourgeois, they could bring little else.

In this chaotic world the Zionist Executive's call for youthful Jewish pioneers for Palestine found an immediate answer. A large section of Jewish youth had passionately joined the Communists, but the call to Palestine had almost equal appeal. This was no longer Borohov's theoretical

'Revolutionary Socialist Zionism,' but something much simpler, more inspired. Thousands of young Jews, girls as well as young men, enrolled in the 'Pioneer' organizations, making for the Mediterranean and Black Sea ports, many of them smuggling themselves across the Soviet frontier, braving imprisonment, starvation, and death. Small groups, it is said, even made for Palestine by crossing the Caucasus on foot. The movement had all the intensity of a religious revival. A minority, several thousand in each of the post-War years, actually reached Palestine, where they were able to work in road gangs on the highways which the British Government of Palestine was constructing. One of the strange sights of Palestine in 1919-20 was that of gangs of typical young urban European Jews, with girls amongst them, still white-skinned, soft-handed, un-acclimatized, hammering stones, sweating and toiling under burning Palestinian sun. In 1920, after the Zionists had acquired the Valley of Jezreel, collective groups of these young Jewish workers were sent there to prepare its waste lands for cultivation.

This was the heroic stage, the climax of Zionist colonization in Palestine.

Conditions were hard, almost impossible. The great majority of the young workers were utterly inexperienced, and the few older seasoned Jewish workers acting as instructors were few and far between. No amenities existed and the funds immediately available were insufficient to give the pioneers more than the most rudimentary equipment. The climate was new and exhausting and the district unhealthy. Malaria and dysentery were epidemic diseases, claiming their victims.

But the young Jews held out. In their communal groups they made a cult of poverty. At night camp-fires, marking the cluster of tents on the sites where settlements were being prepared, shone from end to end of the valley. Round the camp-fires the young settler spent the night in endless discussion on Marxist and Zionist topics, sang patriotic songs, or danced a violent South Russian dance, the

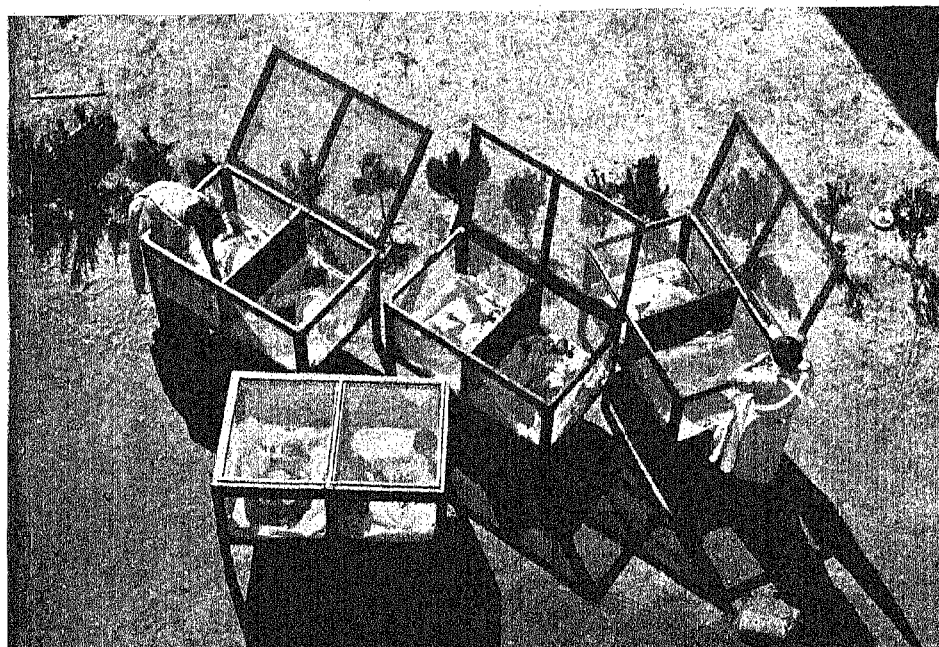


*Above: Communal Settlement, Beth Alpha*

PLATE II

*Below: Open air crèche in Settlement*

[Facing page 120]





'Horrah,' adopted as the national dance of Jewish Palestine, a wild dance of self-forgetfulness, of escape from individual consciousness—a Jewish intellectual counterpart to the negro dances then sweeping Western Europe and America.

In the daytime they toiled indefatigably, possessed by their national and social hysteria, which helped them not only over hardships but to become experienced and efficient farmers. Not only by miracles, by self-sacrificing labour which claimed many victims, but through scientific methods and efficient organization the face of Jezreel was changed, swamps were drained, rocks and stones removed, fields ploughed, hill-sides afforested with hundreds of thousands of trees, and the foundations for a whole chain of communal or co-operative villages laid. By 1922 the Valley of Jezreel was fit for cultivation and settlement. According to programme new areas should now have been acquired for colonization by a wave of new working immigrants. But instead, after all the wild hopes, there were not even sufficient funds to equip the existing settlements. And in the Diaspora the Zionist movement had sadly shrunk.

What had happened ?

First, alas for Jewish hopes ! The Jews had been painfully reminded that Palestine was not an empty country, but part of the Arab Middle East inhabited by a branch of the Arab people with a social and political life of their own. The Palestine Arabs were weak, leaderless, and primitive ; for centuries they had been an utterly subject people, passively acquiescing in their fate. But, for better or worse, the War had broken their chains and roused them, opened their eyes to possibilities of national revival. Now they were suddenly faced with Jewish penetration and a strange Jewish faith in Palestine as a country belonging to Jews abroad, 'Eretz Israel,' Land of the Jews. For all that the Arabs had seen the overwhelming force of the British Army and knew their own powerlessness, fear of this uncanny Jewish invasion roused them into making the only answer they knew. In 1920, and again in 1921, Arab

nationalist demonstrations for independence ended in anti-Jewish disturbances in which, both times, Arab nationalists—but also peasants out for loot—spontaneously attacked Jewish quarters and Jewish settlements in most of Palestine. The attacks were wild, ill-organized, and not very effective ; they were put down in a day or two, but the fact that they could have occurred, the violent nature of the outbreaks, and the hostile attitude of the British officials, came as a sudden shock to Zionists abroad ; there might be prospects for Jewish colonists in Palestine, but there could be no miracle ! The first Zionist fervour began to subside.

At the same time certain Zionist divergences had come to a head. The wealthy American Jewish communal leaders who had established an elaborate organization for Jewish relief in Europe had been ready to participate on a large scale in the Palestine work, provided they could retain control. Instead, they found European Zionism a mass movement insistent upon its nationalist and democratic character. The American leaders, pious Jewish millionaire bankers, lawyers, and Government officials, were similarly shocked by the young East European Jewish immigrants into Palestine, with their alleged Bolshevik and atheist outlook, their wild unconventional life of men and women living together in communes, and their propagation of such a dangerous doctrine as a distinct ' Jewish nationality.' The Zionist enthusiasm of the American leaders dropped as quickly as it had been aroused. They formulated their demands : control of the movement, colonization on sound business lines. There was really a struggle between two concepts. Should Zionism be considered a Jewish philanthropic effort on a national scale, or should it be a Jewish nationalist movement, based on the Jewish masses, messianic in character, introducing the dangerous concept of Jewish nationality, aiming at solving the whole Jewish question ? The split was intensified by a struggle for the leadership between Brandeis, one of the leading American judges, with considerable authority at Washington, and Weizman, supported by the European

Zionists. After sharp conflicts the Americans were out-voted, and after 1921 the Brandeis group officially refused to participate any longer in the Zionist organization. With their withdrawal all chance of influencing the big Jewish financial interests was gone. At once the hollowness of the Zionist position was shown up. The optimistic budgets drawn up two years before collapsed, Zionist headquarters in London immediately found themselves in financial difficulties, and, far from further immigration, all efforts had to be concentrated on desperate measures in keeping the existing preliminary colonization scheme in Palestine alive. Immigration in 1922 and 1923 remained a mere trickle of a few thousands ; it was obvious that there could be no question of transferring a significant portion of the millions of impoverished Jews in Eastern Europe, and it was not even known how long the experiment could be continued.

By 1922, therefore, the British had the situation in Palestine well in hand ; they could consider what to do with the country.

In 1922 the British Government considered the situation sufficiently clear to issue the final and authoritative statement of its policy in Palestine, afterwards known as the Churchill White Book. This was quite a remarkable document, typical of British post-War declarations which said nothing at all, a forerunner of all the ambiguous definitions applied to 'Non-Intervention.'

The Palestine Arabs were first reassured that Palestine would not become a Jewish state :

'Phrases have been used such as that Palestine is to become as Jewish as England is English. His Majesty's Government regard any such expectation as impracticable, and have no such aim in view. They would draw attention to the fact that the terms of the Declaration referred to do not contemplate that Palestine as a whole should be converted into a Jewish National Home, but that such a Home should be founded in Palestine.'

This obviously suggests a Jewish National Home which would only be a minority factor in Palestine.



On the Jewish side the statement was equally vague and reassuring :

‘ So far as the Jewish population of Palestine are concerned it appears that some among them are apprehensive that His Majesty’s Government may depart from the policy embodied in the Declaration of 1917.

‘ It is necessary, therefore, once more to affirm that these fears are unfounded, and that that Declaration, reaffirmed by the conference of the principal Allied Powers at San Remo and again in the Treaty of Sèvres, is not susceptible of change.’

Britain would therefore continue to rule Palestine and to support the upbuilding of the Jewish National Home against Arab opposition. But how was this National Home conceived ? The statement said that during the last two or three generations a Jewish community of over 80,000 had been created in Palestine, which had its own political and municipal organs, its own educational and religious system, its Hebrew language and separate intellectual and social life.

‘ When it is asked what is meant by the development of the Jewish National Home in Palestine, it may be answered that it is not the imposition of the Jewish nationality upon the inhabitants of Palestine as a whole, but the further development of the existing Jewish community, with the assistance of Jews in other parts of the world, in order that it may become a centre in which the Jewish people as a whole may take, on grounds of religion and race, an interest and a pride.

‘ But in order that this community should have the best prospect of free development and provide a full opportunity for the Jewish people to display its capacities, it is essential that it should know that it is in Palestine as of right and not on sufferance. That is the reason why it is necessary that the existence of the Jewish National Home in Palestine should be internationally guaranteed, and that it should be formally recognized to rest upon ancient historic connection.’

Superficially, this would seem a confused statement, not touching the essential contradiction of a Jewish sector of Palestine permitted to grow without limits within the limited area of Palestine and against the growing resistance

of the Arab majority. In actual fact the purpose of the statement is fairly clearly to limit the Zionist experiment and change its nature.

This new cultural National Home of 1922 had little to do with the demand for mass colonization in Palestine in order to relieve the sufferings of millions of Jews in Eastern Europe, which the Zionists had put to the British Government in 1917, and which (as the *Peel Report* admits) the British Government had in principle promised to fulfil.

Instead, the Jewish people was now to be satisfied with a cultural centre in a British colony, Palestine, which would remain predominantly Arab and be ruled in colonial style.

Why this change? In 1922, had the British been willing, large Jewish immigration and colonization in Palestine could have been pushed through with little difficulty. Arab nationalism was a defeated and scattered force. Mussolini had only just come to power in a disunited Italy. It is therefore obvious that by 1922 British policy had turned against the idea of a real Jewish state in Palestine. The reasons were not far to seek. Britain did not need any special support in Palestine. A Jewish state would only be a disturbing factor among the Arab countries with whom Britain was on the best of terms. Jewish capitalist development might bring dissatisfied Jewish proletarian workers to Palestine, and thus create an unwelcome danger-spot. In effect, therefore, the Churchill White Book, behind its cultural admiration for the Jewish people, decided against any significant Jewish increase in Palestine; rather like the Pharaoh who had said: 'Come, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply and it come to pass that when there falleth out any war they join also our enemies and fight against us.' The most dangerous enemy in the eyes of British colonial officials (still blissfully ignorant of Addis Ababa, Madrid, or Shanghai!) was Soviet Russia, still an outlaw state outside the League of Nations, run by men with whose outlook a section of the Palestine Jews were suspected of having strong affinities. The economic set-

back of Zionism was therefore a good opportunity to restrict its aims. As the *Peel Report* admits :

‘ One reason why no public allusion to a State was made in 1922 was the same reason why no such allusion had been made in 1917. The National Home was still no more than an experiment . . . it would be a very long time, it seemed, before the Jews could become a majority in the country.’

All in all, the White Book showed plainly how the Colonial Office conceived the requirements of British policy in Palestine : a predominantly Arab country containing a Jewish National Home, but only a cultural centre, too small to rouse Arabs to serious opposition, but providing a good reason for impartial British rule over the whole country. It meant that the Palestine Arabs could not have their independence and the Jews could not have their Jewish state. But British policy was justified :

‘ This, then, is the interpretation which His Majesty’s Government place upon the Declaration of 1917, and, so understood, the Secretary of State is of the opinion that it does not contain or imply anything which need cause either alarm to the Arab population of Palestine or disappointment to the Jews.’

Conscious irony ? Probably not.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE FIRST ZIONIST PUSH (1924-29)

**A**LREADY, two years later, British plans for a balance in Palestine were disturbed.

What British legislators in Whitehall had not understood was that the Jewish rush for Palestine was only a symptom of the economic crisis of Europe, Eastern Europe particularly, which had sent millions of European emigrants to America, and which was steadily developing rather than being solved. Before the War 150,000 Jews had annually left Eastern Europe for overseas countries. But after the War this number diminished fast. Outlet after outlet was closed. And in 1924 the United States of America, greatest capitalist state and land of unlimited opportunities, virtually closed their gates to European migration.

The first result of this sudden closing of the gates was that 40,000 Polish Jewish emigrants were diverted to the only country open to them, Palestine, where they created such trade conditions that another 30,000 Jews, including many thousands of organized Zionist workers, could follow in their wake.

Figures for these three years are significant :

	<i>Jewish Immigration into U.S.A.</i>	<i>Jewish Immigration into Palestine</i>
1924 . . .	50,000	16,000
1925 . . .	10,000	37,000
1926 . . .	10,000	15,000

The figures for Palestine include estimated illegal emigrants. The net result of this migration rush was that the Jewish population of Palestine was doubled, its character, like that of Zionism, utterly changed, and the

balance so carefully designed by the Colonial Office completely disturbed.

The bulk of the new-comers had little in common with the young idealists who had preceded them. Their migration was another phase of Zionism, but the majority were not Zionists at all. They were a typical mob of emigrants : small traders, tailors, shoemakers, barbers, a generous sprinkling of real estate speculators, petty bankers and usurers, with a crowd of rabbis and a handful of Jewish swindlers and prostitutes thrown in—in fact, a typical cross-section of that same noisy, swarming Jewish crowd which fills the streets of Warsaw and Whitechapel and the East Side of New York, and has given Tel Aviv that typical Jewish middle class air which, tempered by the presence of vigorous young workers and a general fresh outdoor look, it possesses to this day.

In addition, though none of the immigrants was very rich, in the aggregate they brought an unprecedented amount of money into the country.

Nationalism had not brought these middle class Jews to Palestine, though once they were there they immediately came under its influence. They had left Europe, which offered them few prospects, and had turned to Palestine because of sudden rumours of glamorous economic prospects which had suddenly, in an almost inexplicable way, spread through the small Jewish towns of Poland.

These rumours contained a small amount of truth and a great deal of illusion, but a small amount of truth all the same.

For a brief spell the arrival of the immigrants produced one of the craziest of all miniature booms. Colonial countries have known wild trade booms only too well, but usually these booms have been associated with the exploitation of some sort of natural wealth—gold, chemicals, rubber, cotton, whatever it might be. But in Palestine there was absolutely no such wealth—the expansion of orange and grape-fruit plantations only took place several years after the immigration rush ; it saved many of the immigrants,

but it had not attracted them. What happened in Palestine was simply that these immigrants poured into Tel Aviv, a city in the midst of bare sands and without a hinterland, and began feverishly to buy plots and to build houses, as though really actuated by a mysterious national urge. Within a month or two after the first few thousand or so had arrived the miracle seemed to have happened: a speculative real estate boom had set in, causing land values and the values of everything to soar up and up, and this, combined in a queer way with the *mystique* of Zionism, Palestine, and the Balfour Declaration, drew thousands and thousands more middle class Jews from Poland or Latvia or Rumania into the country. In three years, between 1924 and 1927, the population of Tel Aviv jumped from 10,000 to 50,000. Everything—and this is the strange atmosphere about Zionism which has continued to this day—proceeded just as though some great source of natural wealth had been discovered. Tel Aviv was a turmoil of building, whole streets were being laid down, small Jewish ‘capitalists’<sup>1</sup> rushed to establish the same grocery and tailor and barber shops and even small textile or clothing factories of the type they had run in Poland, young Jewish workers in thousands flocked into Tel Aviv, organizing themselves almost over night in typical militant Jewish trade unions, earning wages approaching European standards and metamorphosing themselves with traditional Jewish swiftness from raw Jewish intellectuals into hardened, sunburned Jewish bricklayers, plasterers, plumbers, electricians, mechanics, or garage hands. Not only Tel Aviv, but the whole country changed. The new urban population had to be fed. The Jewish agricultural communes and co-operatives immediately formed one single efficient marketing co-operative; the new demand for their agricultural produce enabled them to expand their production and to put themselves once and for all on a paying basis.

<sup>1</sup> The official classification of a capitalist immigrant in Palestine is the ‘head of a family owning £1000 or more.’

In 1927 Tel Aviv had become a bustling, modern city of 50,000 inhabitants, entirely Jewish, a strange city, sprung up over night on desert sands, looking partly East European and partly modern American, with a suspicious air of window-dressing, but with nothing of the East about it ; in fact, a city which deliberately shut out the East, turning its face inward, living quite apart by the momentum of its own intensity.

The one thing it lacked was a real economic basis.

In the spring of 1927 the inevitable happened. The first signal of danger was the collapse of the Polish Zloty, which hit many of the immigrants very hard. But this was no more than a signal. In reality the boom collapsed because it had never had any justification. Although quite a surprising number of small shops and factories had been put up in so short a time, the main Jewish industry in Tel Aviv had been house-building—immigrants putting up and letting houses to each other, and this unfortunately could not go on for ever, nor even for very long. Once the illusion was damaged, therefore, the collapse was swift. In fact, it was more than swift, it was startling. The first cloud of a credit crisis appeared on the horizon in 1927. Almost at once a large building co-operative built up by the Jewish Labour Federation (Histadrut) with commendable optimism and commendable swiftness, but with incongruously insufficient capital, collapsed and went bankrupt. This was the beginning of general panic. The harsh realities of Palestine suddenly became apparent. Three months after the boom had reached its height, building in Tel Aviv had stopped as if by magic ; 10,000 workers, that is, nearly the whole working population, stood unemployed in the streets ; there was a flight of capital. Luxury shops and flats so recklessly put up stood empty or were turned into stables, and new-comers in hundreds, and for a short while in thousands, were leaving the country again.

Was it all over ? The depression, even more than the boom, showed up certain peculiar and incalculable factors in the Jewish situation in Palestine.

The appeal of Zionism, strangely enough, hardly diminished. While a minority of the new-comers saved themselves or their capital by leaving again, the majority had burned their boats. Palestine was their new home, and there was no return. The pioneer rather than the middle class immigrant came to the fore again. Tel Aviv was a city of youth, unique in that nearly its whole working population was under twenty-five. In the daytime these young Zionist workers might be hungry enough, standing in queues at the co-operative labour exchange or soup kitchens for unemployed, but at night, in the warm, starry nights of this coast where three thousand years before the Philistines had once built their cities, the strange inspiration of Zionism still held, and Jewish men and girls still marched through the streets in groups, singing the rhythmical new Hebrew songs, breaking now and then into their primitive group dance, the Horrah.

The second fact which stood out was that because Jewish world support for Palestine was actuated largely by developments outside the country, it remained almost unaffected by the fluctuations of the Palestine situation. Campaigns for the Zionist funds were carried on ; in fact, as the depression in Palestine coincided with a great boom period in America, which greatly increased the generosity of the American Jews, the Zionist Organization could use nearly one million pounds from all sources to relieve the Palestine situation by systematic new colonization.

The third fact was that Jewish immigration into Palestine differed from all other modern immigrations because it could largely finance itself. And this was because the pressure behind the Jewish immigrants was as much political as economic, pressing hard upon a class which elsewhere was practically never found among immigrants, namely, small capitalists with reasonable business knowledge and prospects, who might indeed lose half their money in a new country but could afterwards adjust themselves to a new standard of living and carry on with the rest. And this is actually what happened in Tel Aviv.



Their recovery was helped by a fourth new factor, unexpected enough, which helped to overcome the depression. Tel Aviv had sprung up in the midst of what seemed arid emptiness. Yet no sooner had it been built than Palestine's natural wealth, its great stretch of citrus soil along the coastal belt, was discovered and immediately utilized. In 1927-28-29 citrus plantations were laid down north and south of Tel Aviv as fast as could be done, and in 1929 Tel Aviv had already become the marketing town of a considerable area of flourishing young plantations. For all these reasons the depression passed almost as swiftly as it had arrived, and as unexpectedly. At the end of 1928, when the dust had cleared, the British and the Arabs in Palestine found themselves faced with a strange *fait accompli*, an almost autonomous Jewish sector in Palestine, which, as the *Peel Report* said, differed from Europe only in its greater intensity of life.

The new Jewish population numbered 170,000, of whom 50,000, mainly Oriental Jews, lived in Jerusalem, another 50,000, a more modern and bustling element, in the new city of Tel Aviv, 15,000 in Haifa, already spoken of as a port with a great future, and most of the remainder spread over about sixty to seventy agricultural settlements of all sizes in the coastal plain and the valleys of Galilee. The Jews were no longer even a purely urban community. Self-assured young farmers in their overalls and with their tanned outdoor look had become a permanent part of the street picture of Palestinian cities and villages.

Several large new industrial undertakings had been set up by Jews, amongst them the Palestine Electric Corporation, British and Jewish supported, which aimed at supplying the whole country with cheap power ; a large cement factory near Haifa, a soap factory with considerable export trade in the same city, while preparations to exploit the natural chemical resources of the Dead Sea were already under way. In and around Tel Aviv, against all expectations, a number of small industries had been established, and seemed to be holding their own. But what was

probably the most surprising thing about this Jewish section of Palestine was the extent to which it had become economically, socially, and culturally independent, almost a state within a state. To a surprising extent the immigrants had become organized. A representative institution, the National Council of Palestine Jews (Va'ad Leumi), had been set up and been authorized by the Government to levy voluntary taxation and run essential social services. Municipal authorities, from the important Tel Aviv municipality down to the smallest local council, had been set up wherever Jewish immigrants had arrived. The usual intellectual atmosphere of European Jews had been fully maintained. An intricate political, social and cultural life, represented by innumerable bodies, committees, and movements, was carried on with an intensity as though the outside world did not exist. The Hebrew language was being ardently supported by its Zionist adherents. An educational system of European standards had immediately been set up. An astonishing Hebrew Press, a Hebrew theatre, and a Hebrew literature in which every talent brought from Europe was utilized, had been created. But the most surprising and most significant change, as far as the Jews were concerned, was the successful emergence of the new Jewish working class and the surprising achievements of that unique body, the General Federation of Jewish Labour ; unique, because it was a Labour Organization whose members were almost entirely of middle class origin.

In 1920 the Jewish workers in Palestine had united in one single federation of unions, known by its Hebrew name of Histadrut.

But in the new Jewish Palestine this young and militant Labour Federation already had its ideological difficulties.

It had not really begun as a trade union at all, but rather as a kind of colonization co-operative in which all members had equal status, and which collaborated with official Zionist institutions in the Zionist work. That the Histadrut contained a strong Left wing of young people with

pronouncedly revolutionary views, theoretically rejecting all bourgeois ties and advocating the joint organization of Jewish and Arab workers on a militant basis, had not affected it very much. Apart from the young pioneers, there was hardly any other Jewish class in Palestine at all. Living in their agricultural communes on land owned by the Jewish National Fund or property of the Jewish nation, struggling all day long to turn themselves into skilled ploughmen and farmers and mechanics, isolated from the world, they had little contact with the Arabs, and in their isolation could hold fast to their dream of a Jewish Palestine, socialist from the beginning, based on socialist communes built on national land (this was in 1919-23 !).

The new Jewish capitalist immigration of 1924-25 shattered this dream. The brisk capitalist development in Tel Aviv, Haifa, and the citrus belt immediately took first place ; the Histadrut immigrants in Tel Aviv and the orange groves worked as ordinary hired labourers, at once involved in bitter struggles against exploitation, and at once ideological conflict, no less bitter, broke out in Histadrut ranks. Though Zionist national colonization would continue, it was obvious that the growth of Jewish Palestine under the British regime would be on capitalist lines, and colonial capitalist lines at that. The seeds of economic injustice, and the same class struggle from which the young Jewish workers had escaped, had been implanted into Palestine. What should the Histadrut attitude be ? It seemed a parting of the ways. Should the Jewish workers, nationalists on the one hand, class-conscious and militant on the other, make common cause with the Arab workers in Palestine or with the bourgeois Zionists ?

The issue was fought out at a conference called in the summer of 1924 at Ein Harod, the largest Jezreel commune, nestling in the shadow of Mount Gilboa ; in Jewish and Russian fashion, it was fought out in a series of impassioned ideological debates.

What innocent times ! The actual cause for calling the conference was that in London MacDonald's first Labour

Government had just taken office, and might conceivably introduce socialist legislation throughout the Empire. It was felt that the Histadrut must make a decisive choice. The militant Left minority demanded that, in view of Jewish capitalist development, the Jewish workers must unite with Arab workers and peasants in joint unions, and create a Palestine socialist movement to fight against the British imperialists and the Jewish capitalists and the Arab feudal lords. No other course was possible. They had not left Russia, these young Jews felt, to prepare a refuge for Jewish capitalists.

How much reality could such a programme have achieved? Could these young Jews, for all their ardour and experience as socialist agitators, have touched the inarticulate Arabs in a country still utterly strange to them? Perhaps, had they gained their way, Jewish and Arab opposition need not have been quite so sharply defined; the idea of common working class action would have been introduced into Palestine, and the political situation might always have been slightly different. But in any case the young theoretical socialists were overborne; the Histadrut majority, led by Ben Gurion and Berl Katznelson (the two present leaders of the Histadrut), imposed its Zionist sentiments, which implied strict separation between Jewish and Arab workers, no political socialism, but on the contrary complete working-class collaboration with all other Zionists in the upbuilding of the Jewish National Home. This decision marked the end of theoretical socialism in the Histadrut. The extreme Left wing collapsed, and eighty of its leading members, unwilling to continue in Palestine, departed for the Soviet Union. A certain youthful socialist enthusiasm and wildness had gone from the Histadrut. But at the same time this turn from political socialism opened the way for collaboration between the pioneers in Palestine and wider Jewish circles outside, which the Zionists were trying to achieve.

In practice, this meant collaboration with the wealthy American Jews, who controlled Jewish communal and

philanthropic organizations like the 'Joint Distribution Committee,' whose funds far exceeded those of the Zionists and who had withdrawn suspiciously, early in 1921, from what seemed the subversive nationalism of the Jewish masses and had since then kept aloof from Palestine.

Now the time seemed exceptionally favourable for a joint effort.

In America the industrial and stock exchange boom was continuing unchecked ; American money for charity, including Jewish money, flowed more easily than ever before.

Palestine was a definite success. The efforts of the Zionists, once dismissed as Utopian, had, on the contrary, proved themselves successful. To have 180,000 Jews settled in Palestine was an astonishing achievement, but at the same time the rate of progress caused little fear that a real Jewish State might be established which would undermine the national status of British and American citizens 'of the Mosaic persuasion.' Jewish Labour, too, had become safe. There was no more talk of revolution, as in the wild young days of 1921. In fact, the co-operative and communal agricultural colonies gave reactionary Jewish business men a splendid opportunity to salve their consciences by being progressive in another country—bankers in New York, idealists in Zion. There was no longer any reason not to support Jewish Palestine and even the Labour Settlements.

But there was also a much more positive reason why these wealthy assimilated Jews were unconsciously brought nearer to Palestine.

American prosperity was only one side of the picture which the contemporary post-War presented. Eastern Europe, still suffering from the War disasters, did not share American conditions, and the millions of Jews in the Jewish Pale, who had not vanished in the Soviet Union, were growing more and more impoverished. In Germany, at the moment enjoying a false and insecure prosperity, the tom-tom had begun softly to beat ; Hitler, a warning

spectre, was beginning his march to that fantastic height of power to which he was to be hoisted by the convulsion of European capitalism. Soft but unmistakable echoes of danger penetrated even through the din of Wall Street prosperity into the drawing-rooms of the Jewish bankers in New York.

Palestine was attractive ; it seemed to offer an easy way of helping persecuted and refugee Jews. In 1929 Weizman accomplished what Herzl had never succeeded in doing ; he caught the first big Jewish millionaire for Zionism. This was none other than Alfred Mond, later ennobled as Lord Melchett, the ruthless chief of Imperial Chemical Industries and a former British Cabinet member.

Such success was impressive. Early in 1929, through Alfred Mond's energetic mediation, the rift between Weizman and the wealthy American Jews was at last bridged. A new agreement was reached : the Palestine work was to be put on a business basis and administered by a Jewish Agency, on which the Zionist Organization and the American Jewish notables would have equal representation.

In fact, this meant that now that the difficulties of principle had been moved out of the way, American Jews would agree to subsidize the Zionist movement in return for a partial say in the administration of the funds in Palestine.

Agreement was not reached without some protest by followers of each side. Zionism was a mass movement with a strong socialist tinge ; the American leaders were autocratic millionaires. That they both should have come to a ready agreement was symptomatic of that anti-Semitism whose rise, even in prosperity conditions, was dimly felt on all sides, and if Palestine gave an impression of an easy way out, wider and wider Jewish circles were attracted to the idea.

The final agreement for the new Jewish Agency was signed in August, 1929, in Zurich, in Switzerland, just after the conclusion of the Zionist Congress.

The peaceful beauty of the pleasant city of Zurich, with its blue lake and neat houses along the green shores and the snow-capped peaks in the distance, seemed to provide a fitting background for the occasion.

It was certainly the most brilliant Jewish gathering of modern times, and it seemed to create its own optimism. Zionists, many of them men hardened in struggles of Palestine, found themselves in strange company. Had they at last succeeded? Zurich's fashionable hotels, like the Dolder and the Baur-au-Lac, were filled to overflowing. At Jewish Agency meetings men like Alfred Mond or Louis Marshall, the dictator of American Jewry, or Felix Warburg of Kuhn, Loeb and Co., rivalled each other in their idealism, and, while not committing themselves to anything absolutely definite, as was the way with bankers, declared themselves enthusiastically for the building up of Jewish Palestine.

In spite of alarmist rumours of the dangerous situation in the country almost the entire Zionist leadership of Palestine had come to the meeting, irresistibly attracted by the glamour of great names in Jewry.<sup>1</sup>

The future seemed promising. Was not this year, 1929, the *annus mirabilis*, in which, in the neat phrase of an American writer, Wall Street seemed to lead straight into Paradise? Was not the participation of these wealthy American Jews a victory for the idea of the Movement, which would now have almost unlimited funds at its disposal? As the Jewish Agency meeting was concluded, and the delegates dispersed to summer resorts in Switzerland and elsewhere, Zionist hopes had risen higher than ever before.

A week later a bomb had exploded and blown yet another Jewish messianic dream sky-high. On August 23, 1929, the Jewish world, utterly unprepared, was overwhelmed by shock to read of rioting in Jerusalem, Jewish massacres

<sup>1</sup> It was a strange case of false security, because the same leaders who could not resist leaving the country had repeatedly warned the Palestine Government about the growing state of insecurity.

in Hebron and Safed, of sporadic fighting all through the country, of British troops rushed into action, of emigration and colonization stopped, and of a hostile attitude on the part of the British Government.

A few weeks later another and greater rumbling began. The first break in Wall Street had occurred. Not the worst to come by any means, but sufficient to wipe out Zionist hopes of large American contributions to Palestine. }But by then the Zionists were already so busy with the situation in Palestine itself that they had hardly time for this greater disaster.

Since the War the Middle East had never really been at peace.

The wave of Arab national uprising in 1920, which had sufficiently troubled the British and the French and given Zionism its first set-back, had been followed by a few years of comparative peace ; yet it had not been an isolated phenomenon but only one phase in that development of Arab nationalism which was slowly spreading throughout the Middle East, carried by the new urban Arab middle class which was emerging from economic transformation and using national sentiments and tradition to make a bid for power.

The whole Middle East was in the grip of this transformation.

In Arabia Ibn Saud, the Wahabi ruler, expelled the Sherif family, the British protégées, from the Hejaz in 1924 and united almost all Arabia under his personal rule.

In Egypt a wave of nationalist agitation led by Egyptian middle class youth reached a terrorist phase culminating in the murder of Sir Lee Stack and only temporarily interrupted by British repressive measures. In Iraq, that country of wild and starving peasants, of great oil resources, wealthy Baghdad merchants and old-entrenched Arab passion and religious fanaticism, the British were step by step withdrawing from government, content only to safeguard their own economic and strategic interest.

In Syria the French had found their successful African-



Colonial methods a failure against the strength of Arab nationalism and had been faced in 1924 with a national uprising which swept Syria and the Lebanon like a prairie fire, and was only quelled after large-scale war in which the French forces suffered considerable losses and were forced into the humiliating position of an indiscriminate bombardment of Damascus.

Only Palestine seemed quiet. But this quiet was deceptive. It did not mean that the Arab population of the country was in any way less nationalist. It only meant that Arab Palestine, a poor country, lacked the necessary leadership and initiative for action. After 1922 the Arab attitude in Palestine to the political development of the country was typically Arab: it was inert, sullen, and negative. The Arabs refused to recognize the Balfour Declaration. Why not? They had not been consulted. They refused to accept the Churchill White Paper of 1922 which withheld independence from them. In 1923 Herbert Samuel, who might have remembered his Liberal Party philosophy, proposed to set up an advisory and legislative Council, composed of British, Arab, and Jewish representatives, and nominated and elected members in such a manner that the British Government could always be sure of an approving majority. The Council was rejected by the Arabs.

After 1924 the sudden influence of Jewish immigrants and Jewish capital and the overnight growth of Tel Aviv took the Arabs as much by surprise as the British Government. Land values rose to fantastic heights, and during the two years when the War raged across the Syrian frontiers the Palestine Arabs were too disorganized by the startling shower of wealth to offer effective help. And by the time they had gathered their forces and might have offered opposition to further Jewish migration, lo and behold! the Jewish boom had collapsed, Jews seemed to be streaming back to Europe, and the whole disquieting idea of a Jewish National Home had come to a swift end.

But in this the Arabs were deceived like their British

advisers. The surprising Jewish recovery of 1928, the growing tide of anti-Semitism in Europe, and the prospect of further Jewish emigration entirely changed the picture. In the first five or six years of the Mandate the Arabs had opposed Zionism as a dishonest pretext by which the British wished to deprive them of the rule of their country, and this was probably the true estimate of the first intentions of the Colonial Office. But now, in 1928, the Arabs suddenly woke to the fact that a certain sector of Palestine had passed from Arab into Jewish hands, had become like another country, one hundred per cent Jewish, and that the Jews were preparing for a new colonization effort.

The entire situation was changed. That the Jews had acquired their part of Palestine at a price which made the Arab sector far wealthier than the whole of the Arab possessions had been before, did not matter. The issue was no longer one between the Arabs and the British for rights of self-government in Palestine, it was becoming one between Jews and Arabs for possession of Palestine. A new factor which intensified the antagonism between Jews and Arabs was the emergence of a new educated Arab youth—a post-War generation.

The relatively large revenues of the Palestine Government, mainly due to Jewish immigration, had enabled it to set up a public (Arab) school system which was hopelessly scrappy and yet an unprecedented advance on Arab illiteracy in pre-War times, and even the unchanged illiteracy of many other Arab areas. By 1927-28, after the first ten years, this school system was producing its results. A new noisy Arab youth, half uprooted from its traditions, half educated in the sense of Europe, inspired by Arab national tradition but also a prey to every modern influence, found itself in a new Palestine threatened by British and Zionist invaders; inevitably it became a spearhead of extremist national agitation.

Largely through the influence of this youth, which looked to Europe for its ready models, the Arab National Movement was thoroughly reorganized in 1928. The

Palestine Arab Executive became a permanent body ; permanent propaganda centres were set up in every Arab town. The demand for self-government was kept before the public eye. In June, 1928, an all-Palestine Arab Congress was convened which marked an important change in Arab public life. Though family influence still played an important part, this Congress was no longer merely one of clan-nish groups repealing age-old Arab family feuds, but represented all shades of Arab opinion, the land-owners, the business section, the clergy, the Youth Movement—all except, of course, the fourth estate, the peasant and Beduin, the inarticulate ninety per cent of the population. The Congress discussed economic and political questions in naive manner and submitted to the High Commissioner a characteristic memorandum demanding immediate stoppage of Jewish immigration, termination of the Mandate, and full independence.

The memorandum was extreme and undiplomatic. It met its obvious fate, being pigeon-holed somewhere in the Colonial Office ; but it had served its purpose in keeping nationalist agitation in the minds of the people of Palestine.

It was on this basis of growing national consciousness that Haj Amin el Husseini, the young Mufti, both political and religious leader of Arab Palestine, prepared an attack on Zionism and bid for power. The issue he found was typical of him, of the whole Arab mind of to-day, moving in a strange borderland between a medieval religious outlook and the whole strident confusion of the modern economic world. It was a resurrected religious issue, to be used as counter in a social and political struggle.

The carefully chosen pretext was an incident at the Wailing Wall on September 24, 1928, when the Jews, celebrating their Day of Atonement, put up a screen in front of the Wall, and thereby, according to the Mufti, broke an agreement with the Moslem authorities.

The Wailing Wall in modern Jewish Palestine is one of the queerest of phenomena, an example of the illogical time-lag of history.

This Wailing Wall, standing in the midst of the Old City of Jerusalem, is a tall structure of massive stones, venerated by Jews as having once been part of the second Temple—its last remnant.

This actually is doubtful, but still, traditional Jewish belief is sufficiently strong, and on each Day of Atonement, the highest Jewish Festival,<sup>1</sup> crowded Jewish services of mourning for the lost Jewish past have for centuries been held on the pavement outside the wall.

Logically, the Zionists should have prohibited the Wailing Wall ceremony as soon as they were able to, because it is the very opposite of all they stood for. Zionism was an active attempt to find a way out from Jewish history. But the Wailing Wall was the very opposite, a neurotic evasion of realities: it was an attempt to avoid a too difficult struggle by a flight into an unreal past; its very mechanism, the mumbling of meaningless prayers, like magic formulae, the kissing of stones, was that of neurotic infantilism.

It is, therefore, the strangest irony that the Wailing Wall should have become the immediate cause for a new flare-up of Jewish-Arab struggle.

The fatal point at issue was that the Wailing Wall was actually on Moslem property, even revered by the Moslems as the Western Wall of the *Haram-esh-Sharif*, a sacred place of Islam, though one rather forgotten until the Mufti decided to revive its importance.

Since the Middle Ages the Moslem authorities, tolerant of Jewish religious ceremonies, after all closely related to their own and something they could readily understand, had granted Jewish worshippers free access to the narrow

<sup>1</sup> On this Festival, the typical festival of a merchant people, the divine forgiveness for a whole year's sins may be obtained by a day's fasting and repentance. The holiday is still kept most strictly by the merchant and financial classes among the Jews, and it is an awe-inspiring fact that on this day as good as no business can be transacted on the Stock Exchange of London or Paris or New York, and the Stock Exchange of Johannesburg is even officially closed because the Jewish speculators, usually so rational and cynical, are in their synagogue, observing the ancient Fast, swaying in Oriental fashion to chanted Semitic prayer.

pavement below the Wall on the stipulation that no screens, tables, chairs, or any other objects were to be set up. But through the new immigration the number of worshippers had slowly increased, and on the Jewish Day of Atonement, which fell on September 24, 1928, two months after the Palestine Arab Congress, certain ultra-orthodox Jews who felt themselves disturbed by the new crowds had put up a screen to separate themselves from their women-folk, God's ordained lesser creatures. When the British Police, warned of the innovation, demanded the removal of the screen, there was some resistance by the Jewish neurotic worshippers; the screen had to be removed by force, and a small scuffle took place. For the Mufti the incident provided the pretext for which he had been waiting. The next day the Arab nationalist Press magnified the incident out of all proportion; news was spread that the Jews had designs upon the Holy Moslem places, in fact that this had only been the first step in their design to pull down the Mosque of Omar in order to rebuild their Temple on its site, and a campaign of religious incitement of the Arab population was set on foot right through the country.

If the Zionists had been politically wise they would have tried to kill the incident by ignoring it entirely. Unfortunately they were bewildered, and all that was irrational and fanatical in their own outlook was touched. They took the side of their religious fellow Jews. The National Council of Palestine Jews, protesting to Geneva against wild Arab allegations, nevertheless insisted that, while the Jews disclaimed any intention of encroaching upon Moslem rights, they could not in any way yield the traditional rights of free Jewish worship at the Wailing Wall.

The Mufti had his chance to stir the flames. Arab nationalism became symbolized in this religious conflict. At the Wailing Wall Arab agitators carried on a deliberate campaign of provocation, whether by sudden 'building operations' around the Wall or by plain hooliganism during Jewish worship. At the same time protests against a Zionist

threat to Islam, with references to Jewish immorality, Jewish communism, the mixed bathing in Tel Aviv, all suitably included, were sent to the Acting High Commissioner, to King George V, to the League of Nations, and to the Indian Moslems. Religious agitators, appealing to the primitive fanaticism of the fellaheen with 'evidence' of Jewish aggressive intentions, travelled throughout the country. Feelings rose, relations between Zionists and the hostile Arab population were strained to breaking point.

The remarkable thing was that the Mufti and his friends had been permitted to launch this campaign of incitement as though there were no British Government ruling Palestine.

The story of British administration in Palestine after the War is a curious one of an administration divided against itself, opposed to Parliament, inefficient and aimless, giving little indication of that single-minded purpose with which the Empire had once been conquered and built up.

In 1925 Sir Herbert Samuel, the correct Jewish High Commissioner, who had always acted as British representative and never as a Jew, had quietly departed from Jerusalem.

He could certainly be held responsible for some of the political contradictions he left behind him.

He had set up a fairly adequate type of colonial administration, but he had done nothing to solve the fundamental political contradiction from which all disturbances of the peace of the country arose. Nothing had been done in the way of land reform, as good as nothing in the way of self-governing institutions.

Already during this time one thing had become apparent: that the few hundred British officials in the country were almost solidly pro-Arab and anti-Jewish, and that they were giving expression to their views in the administration of the country.

Often this was simply due to plain racial prejudice<sup>1</sup> or

<sup>1</sup> John Haynes Holmes, the American writer, stated that the type of British official he met in Palestine could in America easily have been a member of the Ku-Klux-Klan.

the obvious antipathy bound to arise between ordinary middle class British officials and a sudden invading mass of emotional East European Jews of strange views and appearance, and quite impossible to fit into the traditional framework of colonial administration. But such antipathy resulted mainly in passive opposition.

In the case of a few senior officials their opposition was more active, just because they were not so much anti-Jewish as anti-Zionist. British Conservative opinion was still split on the Palestine question ; these officials belonged to the imperialist wing which considered Zionism and even the French occupation of Syria a mistake and still looked on the Arab Nationalist Movement as a lever for creating a large federated Arab state which would be under British government rather like India.

It was a badly out-dated conception, disregarding the social and economic realities which lay behind the Arab Nationalist Movement. Yet it was as consistently supported in certain British political circles as other causes in direct opposition to imperial interests. British imperialism, particularly in the post-War phase, was anything but a relentless and unfailing machine. Why should illusions be confined to the Left ?

Herbert Samuel departed from Palestine in 1925. Under his successor, Field-Marshal Lord Plumer, the distinguished British veteran general, the anti-Zionist orientation of the Palestine Government remained in the background. It is said of Plumer that on one occasion when the Mufti declared that, if certain Arab demonstrations were banned, he could not be responsible for order, Plumer sent him home with the words that he and not the Mufti was responsible for order and would see that it was maintained.

But under Sir John Chancellor and his Chief Secretary, Harry Luke, who followed Lord Plumer in 1928, the whole British Administration in Palestine became pronouncedly anti-Zionist. Both Chancellor and Luke have variously been accused by the Jews of a definite intrigue to destroy the Jewish National Home. But this is not really true.

They did not take active anti-Jewish steps. Their position was simply this : they were pro-Arab in their sympathies ; considering the Jews a disturbing factor in British-Arab relations. They thought Zionism a mistaken experiment in Palestine, and as Arab opposition was apparently growing throughout Palestine, Zionism was doomed, and they did not see why they should officiously keep it alive.

It is unlikely that they had any more definite policy. In giving the Mufti latitude to conduct his anti-Jewish agitation, they were playing with fire, because every Arab Nationalist Movement in Palestine, even if it seemed purely anti-Jewish at the moment, must ultimately become anti-British too. Nevertheless, it was held that the British position in Palestine was strong enough independent of Zionism, and might become even stronger if Arab demands were gratified. For this reason the Palestine Government significantly let the political situation in Palestine drift in 1928 and 1929.

In the summer of 1929 it drifted very quickly towards danger. In May Sir John Chancellor had left for England on his summer leave. Somewhat later he was followed by most of the Zionist leaders who, in spite of their anxiety about security, were irresistibly drawn by an opportunity to deliver public speeches before a world Jewish audience. In their absence irresponsible elements among the Palestine Jews gained control. On August 15 several hundred misguided young Jewish nationalists from Tel Aviv marched in formation with a blue, white and gold Zionist flag to the Wailing Wall, where passionate speeches were made.

That they should have received official permission for such a demonstration was one of the many inexplicable incidents during the Chancellor-Luke administration.

For the Mufti it was quite enough. The Jews had fallen into his trap. Two days after the Zionist Demonstration, a similar procession of young Arabs from Nablus arranged a counter-demonstration at the same holy place. During the next days, even while the Zionists were engaged in enlarging their ranks at Zurich, armed Arabs were steadily



making their way into Jerusalem. On August 25 fighting broke out between Arabs and Jews in the streets and, as though this had been the awaited signal, mobs of Arab rioters rose throughout the country to attack the Jews.

The worst incident took place on the first day. The small Jewish community in the Arab town of Hebron, not Zionists but religious Arab-speaking Jews already settled for many generations in the town, were massacred, men, women, and children alike, by Arabs maddened by religious incitement. As many as ninety were killed and fifty badly injured. Their whole Jewish quarter was demolished.

A real pogrom, complete with massacre, injury, and loot, had taken place in Zionist Palestine.

## CHAPTER XII

### AFTER THE FIREWORKS

THE first shots were fired in Jerusalem on August 23, 1929, and within forty-eight hours rioting and disorder, growing into insurrection, spread through the country. It was seen that the Arabs had been well prepared. For weeks professional fighters, Beduin, and ordinary marauders had been seeping across the frontiers. In almost every district of Palestine—though there were some significant exceptions—incited Arab mobs rushed to attack the Jews. But it was a strange insurrection. One of the war cries with which the mobs were fired on was : ‘ The Government is with us ! ’

But the fighting took a very different course from Arab expectations. The Zionists might for years have described Palestine in their outside propaganda as a country of smiling peace, but they had also prepared themselves to fight. In Hebron and Safad, where small minorities of orthodox religious Jews were caught helplessly in the midst of Arab towns, there was some horrible butchery. But in all the rest of the country the Zionist settlements easily repulsed the main attacks. But this only increased the disorders. The entire country was in chaos. For nearly a week all central government authority simply vanished. It was seen that the armed forces of a few hundred British policemen and a single British regiment were quite helpless to meet the emergency. In this situation the Acting High Commissioner, Mr. Luke, appeared to lose his head. For three whole days he hesitated to call in outside military aid, as though paralysed by the tragedy he himself had helped to prepare. Then at last, when the situation became

too much and Government House was in danger, he acted. The wires hummed, troops were rushed from Egypt, Malta, and Cyprus, the rebellion was put down in two or three days' sharp fighting between the troops and the Arabs. The Jews had lost a hundred and forty killed, of these nearly a hundred in the two massacres in Hebron and Safed ; total Arab losses probably amount to three to four hundred, and many more wounded.

Order was restored, but the whole country, which only three weeks before would have struck an outside observer as peaceful enough, was filled with intense bewilderment and bitterness.

The Jews, with all the fanatical bitterness of people roused from their illusions, felt themselves betrayed by a combination of Arab murder and British conspiracy.

The Arabs, again, who had risen with the cry of ' the Government is with us ! ' only to be in the end shot down by British troops, felt equally baffled, defeated, and humiliated.

On a small scale it was a rehearsal of that British attitude of non-committal neutrality which was later to throw Europe open to fascism.

When the first dust of battle had blown away the following became clear.

In the actual fighting, in which they had hoped to sweep the Jews into the sea, the Mufti and the Arabs had failed badly. To their surprise—and it was a bitter fact for them to learn—they had found themselves repulsed everywhere by a prepared Zionist defence organization, which had worked in spite of all handicaps. The massacres of Hebron and Safed were those of small, helpless religious communities geographically and politically remote from Zionism. But they had not succeeded in invading a single important Zionist settlement nor had any been evacuated. All over the country, fired by the knowledge that they had no retreat, young Jews in the villages had manned their prepared defence posts with a calm courage which might have done credit to American or Boer pioneers, beating

back the unorganized Arab rushes with little loss or difficulty. In some cases the unfortunate attackers, primitive peasants and Beduin, with a sprinkling of bandits, incited equally by religious fanaticism and rich prospects of loot, urged forward by the cries of their women behind them, suffered considerable casualties.

The Jews were already too strong. In this the Zionists had succeeded. There might be fighting in Palestine, but there could not be pogroms. This was clear to the Arabs; their guerilla tactics in 1936 showed that they had learned their lesson.

But in a political sense the Arabs, when they rioted against British authority in 1929, were more successful than even they themselves were aware.

They had always had their supporters at the British Colonial Office who had always opposed Zionism as a possible danger to British-Arab and British-Moslem relations. The riots of 1929, and the need of rushing troops to Palestine, even though on a small scale, had sufficiently frightened the Colonial Office with the possibility of the Palestine issue spreading trouble throughout the Middle East, even reaching the Indian Moslems. This was something to be avoided at all costs. The Palestine situation, with its incubus of the Jewish National Home, would have to be defined and settled. For the next three years, therefore, the policy of the Colonial Office in the Middle East was characterized by efforts to placate Arab nationalism and to pacify Palestine by a suitable limitation of the Jewish National Home. This the Mufti had achieved.

Once again such an effort was facilitated through coinciding with a significant weakening of the Zionist movement. Though the actual disorders had been suppressed within a week, the riots of 1929 dealt Zionism a spiritual blow from which it never quite recovered.

In August, 1929, the height of optimism had been reached. But the great financial crash which began in Wall Street killed Zionist hopes of obtaining large funds from America. Personal losses weakened Zionism still further.

Louis Marshall, the leader of American Jewry, died in 1929 ; Alfred Mond, Lord Melchett, in 1930. In fact, before the larger Jewish Agency could be established, its basis had been destroyed, and though formally it came into existence, in practice it remained little more than the former Zionist Organization, with its largely middle class support, led by Weizman. In 1930-31 this support, too, was reduced, and in the midst of the economic depression Zionist funds were reduced to less than half. It seemed that the majority of the Jews, with troubles enough of their own, were losing all interest in Palestine.

But this was a gradual process. The immediate effect of the riots seemed the opposite. News of the disturbances, flashed by telegraph wire, had fallen upon the Jews of Europe and America like a bolt from the blue. Pogroms had again taken place, but this time not in the darkness of Czarist Russia, but in Palestine under a British Mandate. The shock was all the more violent for its unexpectedness. World Jewry flared up ; protest meetings, called by the Zionists in London, New York, Johannesburg, Warsaw, at which the wildest accusations were publicly hurled against British government, the Mufti, the Palestine Arabs in general, were attended by thousands of Jews otherwise remote from Zionism ; Downing Street was bombarded with protest resolutions from every important Jewish or pro-Jewish body in the world.

Partly as a result of this international publicity two Commissions of Enquiry were sent to Palestine in 1929.

The first was officially sent out by the League of Nations, theoretically responsible for the Palestine Mandate, to investigate the immediate cause of the outbreaks, namely, the religious dispute between the Arab and Jewish worshippers at the unfortunate Wailing Wall and the *Haram-esh-Sharif*.

This dispute had arisen from a quarrel between Jews and Moslems, it had taken place in Jerusalem, the most holy city of Christendom. The Commission sent out by the League was therefore suitably Christian and international,

consisting of a representative from Sweden, one from Holland, and one from Switzerland. Its investigation lasted into July and August, the unbearably hot summer months, and had to be carried on in the three official languages, with interpreters endlessly echoing each other. . . . The court-room was hot ; the three hapless Commissioners slept most of the time. At the end of their sessions they published a report, confirming the *status quo* of the ' holy places.' This was a few months after the Wailing Wall disturbances, but already no one was interested. The Arab leaders had realized that political and economic issues already carried more weight in Palestine than religious agitation. The Zionists, for their part, were only too glad to let the Wailing Wall question drop out of sight. In this unnoticed way the religious element (*pace* Mr. Shecan, see below) vanished from the conflicts of the Holy Land, not to be seriously revived.

The second commission, the so-called Shaw Commission, appointed by the British Government to enquire into the real causes of the conflict, had quite another and real task.

It consisted of Sir Walter Shaw, an experienced Colonial Chief Justice, Sir Henry Betterton, M.P., Mr. Hopkin Morris, M.P., presumably appointed by the Colonial Office, and Mr. Harry Snell, M.P., representing Mr. MacDonald's Labour Government, which happened to be in office.<sup>1</sup>

The official task of the Shaw Commission was to enquire into the immediate causes of the disturbances, to sum up the situation in Palestine and the whole Zionist-Arab question, and to settle all difficulties in an adequate and final manner. It would be hardly disrespectful to these gentlemen, all new to Palestine, to say that this task was far beyond them, and that not very much would depend

<sup>1</sup> To-day Sir Walter Shaw has become Lord Shaw, Sir Henry Betterton has become Lord Rusholme, and Mr. Harry Snell has been Chairman of the L.C.C. as Lord Snell ; it can be seen that the members of the Commission have continued to rise in political life.

on any report they might produce after an enquiry of a month or two.

Yet at the time (the concluding months of 1929), in Jerusalem itself, at the meetings of the Commission which were held in that atmosphere of harsh and exaggerated limelight which seems an inseparable part of the Palestine problem, both because of its religious traditions and the incessant flood of Zionist propaganda, immediate issues were for a few weeks fought out between British and Jewish and Arab representatives as though the life and death of a national cause depended upon it.

The Arab case, presented by the Mufti and other Arab Nationalist leaders, assisted by a little-known British barrister and, as soon became clear, by Palestine Government spokesmen, was simple enough. The riots had been a spontaneous uprising by the Arab masses, driven to despair by non-fulfilment of their promises and their fear of being submerged by foreign immigrants, who, in addition, had aroused Arab anger by introducing communism, immorality, and the rest of it, into Palestine. The Arab leaders demanded the end of the Mandate and national independence.

The Mufti also plainly reaffirmed his belief during his evidence that the Jews were trying to gain possession of the Mosque of Omar, to rebuild their ancient temple on its site. This accusation was also believed by Mr. Vincent Shecan, the well-known American foreign correspondent and author of *In Search of History*, who gave evidence about a conversation he had held with a young American girl, a casual acquaintance, which seemed to prove to him that the Zionists were aggressive, and who afterwards wrote :

‘ The experience in Palestine had abundantly proved that the Zionist policy belonged not to the forces of light but of darkness.’

and

‘ Palestine would always be a prey to such ghastly horrors as those I saw every day and every night : rebellion, the

eternal intransigence of religion, insured that the problem would never be solved. The Holy Land seemed as near an approximation of hell on earth as I have seen.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *In Search of History*, 1935, pp. 408 and 434.

This may seem unfair, but really Mr. Shecan asks for it, because the important Palestine chapter in his excellent autobiography, *In Search of History*, which contains much shrewd observation, is entirely vitiated by the naïve partisanship with which it is coloured.

In fact, Mr. Shecan has written his entire chapter like a lawyer's argument. For ten pages he emphasizes his first impression of Jewish aggressiveness, supporting it with wild information of armed Jews and unarmed, outnumbered Arabs; that he later realized that the Jews had never attacked is mentioned only in one obscure sentence.

His judgment of the Mufti is ludicrous, like that of a British fascist of General Franco.

'My judgment of character would have told me what the evidence afterwards showed, that his influence in the actual crisis had been used on the side of peace.'

As evidence he makes the astonishing assertion—that Haj Amin el Husseini saved Palestine:

'The tribes from Transjordan could have swept through Palestine in twenty-four hours. They might have been crushed by military force afterwards, but for the moment the Government was feeble beyond belief . . . if the Grand Mufti had not supported them, it is difficult to see how they could have got through the first three or four days at all.'

Alas for Mr. Shecan, these wild horsemen form one of the hoariest of Palestine legends.

Already Lawrence relates how General Bols ('Bols never had any opinion, nor any knowledge') was tempted into a futile raid on Amman through the promise of support from 'twenty thousand horsemen from Transjordan.'

As Lawrence says: 'I asked who the chief of the Beni Sakhr was, and he said Fahad: triumphing in his efficient inroad into what had been my province. It sounded madder and madder. I knew that Fahad could not raise 400 men. . . .'

In 1936, unlike Lawrence, but like General Bols and Mr. Shecan, the Palestine correspondent of the *Daily Herald* discovered fifty thousand horsemen massed in Transjordan, again ready to sweep over Palestine.

The total population of Transjordan, mostly poverty-stricken peasants, is little more than two hundred thousand.

The wild tribesmen are a legend which dies hard, but really Mr. Shecan ought to have known better than to take the East at its own valuation.

The Palestine Arabs are three times more numerous than those of



Well, there have been other hells since !

If the Arab evidence was typical in its sterile extremism of an Oriental ruling class already tending slightly towards fascist outlook, the Zionist evidence was also typical in being over-political, over-done, over-indignant.

To represent their case, the Zionists had briefed not only Harry Sacher and Viscount Erleigh, two capable Jewish barristers, but also Sir Boyd Merriman (in 1937 President of the Divorce Court), a prominent K.C. and Conservative Member of Parliament. But the effect of this array of legal talent was only to provoke inevitable comparison with the apparent poor representation of the Arabs.

The direction of the Jewish evidence was another tactical mistake—Weizman must have been caught napping. It was based on the Zionist *credo*, that the mass of the Palestine Arabs could not be opposed to peaceful Zionist colonization, which benefited the whole country, Jews and Arabs alike. So who was to blame ? The Zionist attack was directed not against the Arabs, but against the Palestine Government, which was accused of containing actively anti-Zionist British officials, quite openly hostile to the Balfour Declaration, who had permitted a small group of Arab extremists, headed by the Mufti, to incite the Arab masses against the Zionists by a lying deception.

This accusation contained a sufficient half-truth to be logically put forward, yet equally it was in sufficient measure only a half-truth to be easily contradicted.

Actually, of course, the Zionists could not have done worse than attack a British colonial administration before an Enquiry Commission appointed by the Colonial Office. The Report of the Shaw Commission when it appeared

Transjordan, better fed, better armed, and probably better fighters. A mob of unorganized Beduin, not led by a Lawrence, would not have had the ghost of a chance of taking a Jewish settlement, and therefore the Mufti did not save anybody.

As Mr. Sheean says of himself in an earlier part of his narrative : ' I had an immense amount of innocence to lose, and with the best will in the world I could not lose it quickly enough.'

gave the inevitable answer. The Palestine Government was whitewashed ; its protégés, the Mufti and the Arab leaders likewise. The Government was not only not to blame for the outbreaks but had even done everything in its power to preserve the peace of the country. The disturbances had been caused by deep-rooted discontent among the Arabs, and could not have been prevented because the Mandate set the Palestine Government an impossible task.

As the Commission said. ' A National Home for the Jews, in the sense in which it was widely understood, was inconsistent with the claims of Arab nationalists, while the claims of Arab nationalism, if admitted, would have rendered impossible the fulfilment of the pledge to the Jews.'

Jewish immigration might have brought great economic advantages to the Arabs too ; but the direct benefits had been small and the indirect benefits could not be understood by a primitive populace ; but when trade depression and unemployment suddenly followed, for a while Zionist immigration was thought responsible. Racial antipathy needed little further stimulus.

' Racial animosity on the part of the Arabs, consequent upon disappointment upon the political and national aspirations and fear for their economic future, was the fundamental cause of the outbreak of August last.'

That was all. The Peel Commission, engaged seven years later in the same effort of whitewashing, piously remarks of this judgment : ' Subsequent events, in our opinion, have confirmed the truth of these observations, which again reveal the gravity of the problem. The hopes upon which the optimism of 1925 had rested had been shown to be illusory.'

The Shaw Commission therefore recommended that there should be no repetition of the ' excessive ' Jewish immigration of 1925 and 1926, that the British Government should define its Palestine policy, and the interests of the non-Jewish communities ' referred to in the

Mandate ' which were to be safeguarded, that the British Government should publicly assure the Arabs that the Jewish Agency had no special status, and, lastly, to cover the essential negative nature of these conclusions, that a scientific expert should be sent to Palestine to enquire into the possibility of introducing modern agricultural methods to the Arab population which would show that a further Zionist colonization was possible.

In keeping with these proposals, all Jewish immigration under the Government Labour Schedule was stopped throughout 1930.

The intention behind these proposals was plain. Enough Zionism. No Jewish protests could affect this British decision.

The much-heralded scientific expert of the Colonial Office, who arrived in Palestine in May 1930 and spent the summer months in that country, was Sir John Hope Simpson, who had played a successful role in the forced exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1922-1923.

His task in Palestine was—officially—to investigate whether Palestine possessed any further 'absorptive capacity' for further Zionist immigrants. It was, of course, quite a hopeless task. Could the Zionists, without injuring the Arabs, accommodate any further refugees of all categories in Palestine? To answer this question would have involved studying not only every prospect in Palestine, but the whole social-economic background to the Jewish problem. Hope Simpson could hardly do that. His whole investigation showed that he could not understand the strange phenomenon of Zionism at all. But because he conceived his report in a certain scientific and objective spirit, it turned out a queer document, half reactionary, half contradictory, to-day almost forgotten, only occasionally quoted by Arabs or British Communists.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In July, 1938, however, under the influence of German and Austrian developments, Hope Simpson put forward a surprising plea for free immigration of 100,000 Jews into Britain and the Empire.

He found the Arab peasantry mostly in a shocking state of poverty :

‘The economic state of the agricultural population is desperate. Hardly any village exists which is not in debt. . . . Money is so scarce in some places that the villagers purchase the necessities of life by barter, and they cannot pay the tithe without further borrowing. This means increasing the already overwhelming debt to the money-lenders. “We have been struggling in deep water for several years, and very soon the water will close over our heads,” was the statement made in one village, which may be taken as typical of the state of mind of every village.’

In addition to this debt burden there seemed to be an actual shortage of land. The cultivable area of Palestine, Hope Simpson estimated, was  $6\frac{1}{2}$  million dunam.<sup>1</sup> Basing himself upon the large minimum area for each Arab cultivator and dividing the total cultivable area of Palestine by the number of Arab agricultural families, Hope Simpson came to the startling conclusion that even if all the agricultural land in Palestine were divided up between the Arab agricultural population, there would not be nearly enough to afford each peasant family a bare livelihood. On this calculation, therefore, there was no room in Palestine for even a single additional Jewish settler.

But this left out of account the fact that it was the peasant's debt burden which compelled him to cultivate an uneconomically large unit of land. Actually it was in the areas untouched by Jews that the plight of the Arab peasantry was worst. Where the Jews had colonized, there the Arabs had also learned new methods, become slightly less poor, and, in fact, there had been a steady migration of Arab peasants *away from the purely Arab areas* and into the more favoured zone of Jewish colonization. This transformation was so apparent that Hope Simpson was forced to state that scientific agricultural reforms

<sup>1</sup> A very generous under-estimate, as it was afterwards found out.

could change the whole character of the country, giving his personal belief that :

‘ With thorough development of the country there would be room, not only for all the present agricultural population on a higher standard of life than it at present enjoys, but for no less than twenty thousand families of settlers from outside.’

So much for agriculture. On the urban side Hope Simpson found that Jewish industrial and commercial development had changed the character of Palestine—on the whole beneficially. But at the same time the economic changes had caused Arab unemployment. It was therefore unjust ‘ that a Jew from Poland, Lithuania, or Yemen should be admitted to fill an existing vacancy, while in Palestine there were already workmen capable of filling that vacancy who were unable to find employment,’ i.e. it was unjust to permit further Jewish labour immigration.

‘ This policy,’ Hope Simpson wrote, ‘ would be unacceptable to the Jewish authorities.’

He was right, and he knew why he made this statement, because he had been in the country for some time and talked to British, Jews, and Arabs alike, and he knew that there was something quite fantastic in the suggestion that what Arab unemployment there was would be cured if Zionist immigration and development, on which the prosperity of the country now largely depended, were suddenly stopped. Zionist agricultural colonies in the coastal plains were finding employment for thousands of Arabs ; Zionist commerce and industry had provided the Government with the funds enabling it to spend more on its social services than the neighbouring Arab countries. And quite certainly the Jewish import of capital would not go on if Jews themselves were kept out of the country. So what was to be done ? Again Hope Simpson made an exception which really did away with his first conclusions. As Jewish immigration, taken as a whole, provided a great deal of indirect benefits and employment to the Arab population,

the immigration of such Jewish workers who would be employed in purely Jewish enterprises, the money for which would otherwise not have been forthcoming, should be permitted. As there were practically no Jewish workers employed except in such purely Jewish enterprises, this 'exception' really covered the whole of Jewish labour immigration.

In short, Hope Simpson contradicted himself completely. His main thesis was that Jewish colonization in Palestine could not continue, because the country was too small and crowded, except in certain circumstances when the whole country benefited. But as these circumstances were the rule, and not the exception in Zionist colonization, his thesis was contradicted.

But for the Colonial Office the main thesis was sufficient. Arab nationalism had just revived in a wave of noisy agitation in Egypt which made a settlement in Palestine seem all the more desirable. Little difficulty was to be anticipated. This was at the end of 1930, and Ramsay MacDonald and his Labour Cabinet, helpless in the face of rising difficulties, were little likely to put up any opposition against the permanent imperial advisers, for all that the Labour Party had been strongly pro-Zionist while in *opposition*.

In October, 1930, a White Paper was published, together with the Hope Simpson Report, which went much further than the most pessimistic Zionists had thought or the most optimistic Arab nationalists had expected.

The White Paper declared that much of the unrest in Palestine had arisen because both Jews and Arabs had failed to realize the limits imposed by the double undertaking in the Mandate, and that His Majesty's Government would not be moved by any pressure or threats from their policy. This policy was to be in accordance with the conclusions of the Hope Simpson report. Actually there were significant differences.

Hope Simpson had said that to free land for further Zionist colonization (and lessen some of the appalling

poverty of the country) large-scale agricultural reforms should be undertaken.

The White Paper said that there must be no further Zionist colonization until agricultural reforms had been carried out, when it would be seen whether there was still room in the country.

On the industrial side, too, Hope Simpson's all-important qualification of permitting Jewish immigrants to enter purely Jewish enterprises was left out. The White Paper certainly gave the impression, as the Peel Commission seven years later pointed out, that no Jewish immigration could be permitted as long as a single Arab worker was unemployed.

As unemployment among the Palestine Arabs was likely to be as permanent as in every other country in the world, this could easily be interpreted that Jewish immigration must be shut down for good.

The White Paper was unskilfully worded but its meaning seemed to be clear. The Zionists certainly understood it. They knew the Palestine Administration—bureaucratic, inefficient, closely tied to the feudal Arab leaders. To wait until such an Administration carried out reforms for the betterment of the masses meant waiting for ever. The White Paper, therefore, made it clear that the Colonial Office preferred a backward Arab Palestine to one with a large Jewish population, that it meant to liquidate the Balfour Declaration.

The Zionist movement had been weakened, but the critical moment showed again how much support the Zionists could arouse in an emergency, that is, how steadily anti-Semitic pressure was growing round the Jews.

The moment the White Paper had appeared there was a flare-up of Jewish protest against Britain which spread from Tel Aviv to New York and Warsaw and Bucharest and Johannesburg. Chaim Weizman, together with Lord Melchett and Felix Warburg, the American banker, resigned his position on the Jewish Agency in protest against the British Government's decision, and this protest

was supported by Jewish socialist leaders in Poland and Palestine. In every part of the world protest meetings were held, every possible supporter of Zionism, Jewish and non-Jewish, mobilized against the betrayal of the British pledge to the Jewish people.<sup>1</sup>

The effect of these protests was strengthened by the economic development of Palestine. Once again, to the surprise of hostile British officials, suspicious Arab nationalists and sceptical Jews, Palestine made a surprising economic recovery.

This recovery sprang from two main sources.

The year 1930 might have been a stormy one in Palestine, but in the great world outside an economic blizzard of quite other proportions was raging.

Through the American crash Jewish Agency receipts had naturally dropped to a minimum. But, as in 1924, another movement, that of private capital, much more important and extensive, had set in. A few hundred small merchants in America, who had lost part of their money in the crash, grew frightened and hurried with their savings to Palestine.

It also became fashionable, as the American crash progressed, to say of certain American Jews that the only one of their investments which had not disappeared was that in Palestine, which they had first made in a spirit of charity!

Compared to the numbers of Jews abroad, this influx of small capitalists was an insignificant trickle; but Jewish Palestine was still so small that its economic life was immediately quickened.

At the same time the development of the citrus industry bore fruit. Most of the new investments went into orange and grape-fruit groves, which were spreading across the Palestine coastal belt at an amazing rate, and were to turn Palestine in 1936 into the leading exporting country of citrus fruit. In 1928 Palestine had sixty thousand dunam

<sup>1</sup> During all this time Sidney Webb (Lord Passfield) was Colonial Secretary, though, alas, this fact was of no importance!



of citrus groves ; at the end of 1929 the area had increased to eighty-four thousand dunam ; in 1930 to one hundred and one thousand ; and in 1931 to a hundred and twenty-five thousand dunam, and not much less than half of this area was planted and owned by Arabs. At the end of 1930 a small boom was already developing ; Jewish immigrants and investors from abroad were planting groves as fast as they could ; Arabs, both landowners and peasants, were hastening to sell sections of their land at swollen prices in order to plant groves of their own ; and the whole economic life of Palestine was swiftly expanding again and causing a shortage rather than a surplus of labour.

This created the paradoxical position that just at the time (October, 1930) when the White Paper was published, setting out that there was no room for further colonization in Palestine, all economic conditions which might possibly have justified this conclusion had vanished. The situation was even more absurd because it was a Labour Cabinet, ignorant of the problems and without influence over the Colonial Office, which had to defend the latter's attitude. It was also seen that the Zionists had a good measure of Conservative Party support. The Palestine issue provided too good an opportunity for an attack on the Labour Government to be missed. In a letter to *The Times* on October 30, Baldwin, Austen Chamberlain, and Amery jointly accused Ramsay MacDonald and Lord Passfield of having broken the British pledge contained in the Balfour Declaration. This letter was followed by quite a series of similar pronouncements by men like General Smuts (not unmindful of the Jewish political vote in Johannesburg) and Lloyd George, and the height of the absurdity was reached when, at a full-dress Parliamentary Debate on Palestine, Drummond Shields, MacDonald's Under-Secretary for the Colonies, found himself the only speaker in favour of the White Paper.

This was too much. Though for a time—with a bewildered hope of continuing in office—the Labour Cabinet obstinately supported the views of the permanent officials

at the Colonial Office, by now their vast difficulties at home had become so great that their fear of the Colonial Office was no longer important. It was only too willingly that they abandoned their position on Palestine. In a brief letter from Ramsay MacDonald to Weizman in February, 1931, which, like the White Paper, was to become an historic document (at least in Palestine), the restrictions on further Zionist colonization were jettisoned and the *status quo* of 1929 re-established. That is, Jewish immigration could continue as long as it could be shown that it did not injure Arab economic interests, which at the moment it did not seem to be doing.

The whole incident of the White Paper had been, as the Peel Commission remarked :

‘an impressive demonstration of the political power the Zionists could mobilize in England, provided always they could make out a reasonable case. And this they had been able to do.’

In 1931, therefore, a new Jewish effort, and consequently a new Jewish-Arab conflict, could begin again. The Mufti had held up the Zionists for three vital years, but had not been able, even with help from certain British quarters, to force a liquidation of the Zionist experiment. Yet the delay had meant a severe setback for the Jews and had given the Arab nationalists time to organize their forces. And another result was that both Jews and Arabs were bitterly suspicious of British policy, which seemed to swing backwards and forwards without a plan.

The British Government actually made one more effort to solve the social and economic tangle of Palestine. In the summer of 1931 Mr. Lewis French, an experienced member of the Indian Civil Service, was transferred to Palestine to prepare the details of that comprehensive plan of agricultural reform which Hope Simpson had recommended.

By 1932, when French presented his report, the expansion of the citrus plantations in the coastal plain already dominated Palestine.

French, an honest and sincere administrator with some of that impartiality for which the Colonial Service had at one time been known, produced a good report. He divided Palestine agriculture into two areas. In the coastal plain he found that, while Arab nationalist claims of thousands of peasants displaced by Zionist colonies were a wild exaggeration, yet a small number of Arabs had, without doubt, been rendered landless, and if Jewish land purchases had not created a real landless class this was no guarantee they would not do so in the future, at least, if not regulated.

He also found that in the hill country, which the Jews had hardly touched, the Arab peasants were really in a much worse position, hopelessly in debt to their landlords and moneylenders, and were being relentlessly expropriated. In one particular district the peasants had lost thirty per cent of their holdings to large owners in ten years.<sup>1</sup> This made the question of possible Jewish purchase from these owners very dangerous :

‘ Some form of protection for the small owner appears vital in order to ensure that the concentration of numerous small holdings into the hands of large proprietors does not lead to the same evil as is anticipated from excessive expropriation by Jews.’

To solve these troubles French proposed land reform, debt remission, and intensification of Arab agriculture, which would both help the Arab peasant and free new areas for Zionist colonization ; and, at the same time, legislation to safeguard the minimum subsistence area for the Arab peasant, which he would not be allowed to sell.

In the abstract this plan was good ; only in Palestine as it was, ruled by reactionary British officials hand in hand with the Arab landlord class, it simply remained a paper scheme, not in line with Colonial Office policy.

In the intense political atmosphere of Palestine it met only opposition.

<sup>1</sup> These leading land-owning families of Nablus and Jenin, slowly accumulating the hill lands, were at the same time the extreme leaders of the Arab national bid for power.

The Zionists opposed it because they feared that under the existing Palestine Administration the parts relating to restrictions of land purchases would be carried out, but the reforms would remain a dead letter.

The Arab nationalists opposed it, because, reforms or no reforms, benefits to the Arab peasantry or no benefits, they opposed anything that might open up increased chances for Jewish colonization.

The plan found equally little favour among the British officials in Palestine, who were already administering the country only with difficulty, and had little desire for any reform which might create additional work and possibly lead to new complications.

Quietly, therefore, the French plan was dropped at the end of 1932. Between the Zionists, the Arab nationalist leaders (land-owning interests), and the British officials, the poverty-stricken Arab peasant got his usual deal.

This was the last British attempt to cope with the social and economic problems created by the conflict in Palestine.

It did not matter very much. Already in 1931 and 1932 the stage was set for new developments which would produce far greater changes in the country.

In Germany, where post-War capitalism was breaking up, the drums of fascism were beating steadily louder. The surprising fact which appeared was that it was already forgotten that this was a post-War age. Hitler's brown battalions were in the streets, signalling the greatest upheaval in modern times.

The first sign of this in Palestine was that, in 1932, 15,000 Jewish immigrants swept 'illegally' into Palestine and brought the total immigration figure to 20,000, and were absorbed without difficulty because Jewish money was coming into the country even faster.

Next spring, April 1933, Hitler struck. As far as Palestine was concerned it was as if flood-gates were suddenly opened.

## CHAPTER XIII

### HITLER OVER PALESTINE

**T**O-DAY one can look back on the two years between the summer of 1933 and the summer of 1935 as a definite historical phase which began when Hitler upset the European balance of power and ended when Mussolini destroyed it entirely.

It was certainly a clear-cut historical phase as far as Palestine was concerned.

The contemporary exodus of the Jews of Germany to Palestine and other countries is one of the strangest of modern movements. To find a parallel, one has to go back to the Jewish exodus from medieval Spain, or to the flight of the Huguenots, impoverishing France and enriching Britain and Prussia.

It had certainly little in common with the big migrations of the nineteenth century, with that typical pattern of masses of poor immigrants with little property beyond their few bundles and trunks, urged on by economic pressure, who poured on each other's heels into new overseas countries and developed them with the aid of money profitably invested by lenders in older countries. The German-Jewish migration to Palestine was something quite different. It was not accompanied by outside credits, but financed itself, or did even more than finance itself. It was the sudden exodus of a community of people of established position and considerable wealth, including men of brilliant technical or business experience, in short, not so much an immigration as a transfer.

The German Jews (about 550,000 pure Jews and 350,000

half Jews of mixed parentage) were an almost solid middle class community.

They were no longer capitalists, as the Nazis falsely claimed, but had, in fact, passed more than anybody through the whole development from the independent to the employed middle class and had lost most of their Jewishness and were concentrated in the professions, medicine, law, journalism, and the like, the arts and sciences, to a rather lesser degree in wholesale and retail commerce.

Jewish tradition and German culture had mingled quite well. The German Jews contained quite an amazing number of men with brilliant or world reputations. In 1933 the bulk of the German Jews were firm supporters of the Liberal and Democratic parties. On the whole they were patriotic ; the small Zionist and Communist minorities were vocal but not really important.

Till the last moment the bourgeois Jews (like German Liberals, Socialists, and Communists, for that matter) had under-estimated the Hitler danger and been unable to grasp the reality of the German anti-Semitism smacking of the Middle Ages which Hitler had so ably shaped into a fascist weapon. For the most part they were entirely Germanized, many with family traditions going back for centuries in Germany, and even in the first wild weeks after Hitler's access to power they were unable to believe in the wild threats against their lives and their German existence.

A few months later, however, every shred of this disbelief had gone. The cold pogrom Hitler had promised his adherents had actually set in ; relentlessly, step by step, Jews were being excluded from profession after profession, turned by cold persecution into degraded second-class citizens. And the German Jews, as forerunners, learnt what the entire world has since learnt, and which has sent the people of Europe into the hopeless digging of air-raid shelters—that Hitler means business ! Their reaction was the immemorial one of Jewry : flight, passionate appeal to

co-religionists all over the world, emigration with property or without.

Yet where were these last Jewish emigrants to go? In 1933 there was not a single capitalist country in the world which was still expanding. Only Palestine seemed to offer shelter. Between 1935 and 1937, of the more than one hundred thousand Jews who left Germany, nearly half went to Palestine, while the rest scattered in tiny and insecure groups over the remainder of the world.

This emigration did not remain confined to Germany. Hitler was too great a portent to be kept back by frontiers. From Poland, Latvia, Romania, Austria, even from the U.S.A., middle class Jews in considerable numbers, urged on by mingled fear and messianic hope, poured into Palestine.

Naturally it was the wealthiest and most efficient Jews, who had kept their resources sufficiently liquid, who reached the country first. Their arrival in the spring and summer months of 1933 created such revolutionary economic changes in Jewish Palestine that everything that had happened in the country before seemed immediately insignificant and prehistoric.

It was a matter of weirdly disproportionate scale. In spite of thirty years of Zionist effort, Palestine was, in 1933, still a relatively poor and backward country, with a small and not very rich Jewish population of 200,000 and an Arab population of 800,000, which was still overwhelmingly peasant. Now, suddenly, masses of new-comers, including men who would have been considered rich in Europe, experts in every sphere of business, science, and organization, came flocking into the country. Inevitably the whole of Palestine was turned upside-down. There was an unprecedented boom in houses, building plots, and citrus groves, the only ready channels of investment, but, above all, in the mere building of houses, the laying-out of streets and shops to shelter and feed the masses of new immigrants, the first vital need. But the new-comers had knowledge and experience; within a month Tel

Aviv was a confusion of noise, hammering, and feverish building activity ; from building itself the boom spread with Jewish swiftness to a whole range of light industries ; shops were being opened at the rate of streets at a time, commerce flourished, land values rose to fantastic heights, and, as the immigrants brought their property, imports into the country became an ever-increasing tide. In short, keeping in mind the miniature scale, the three years 1933-34-35 saw as hectic a financial boom in Palestine as any in the post-War world.

In 1933 40,000 Jewish immigrants entered Palestine, in 1934 50,000, in 1935, counting illegal travellers, probably as many as 70,000. Between 1932 and the end of 1935 the Jewish population of Palestine doubled from 180,000 to 360,000, or 28 per cent of the total population. Tel Aviv, from a small town, became a miniature metropolis of nearly 150,000 Jewish inhabitants, with its own real estate boom and traffic blocks and half-million municipal budget. Exports and imports, money in circulation, all doubled ; a Government surplus of four to five million pounds was accumulated ; the whole economy of the country was turned upside down.<sup>1</sup>

The astonishing aspect—and here this phase in Jewish Palestine is distinguished from all other colonial booms—was that this whole hectic development was built up, at least as far as the European Jews were concerned, on European social and cultural standards. Almost as the immigrants arrived, admirable health and education services were established, the immigrants were widely

<sup>1</sup> A few figures from the *Peel Report* (p. 86) indicate the effect of the new immigration upon the combined economy of Palestine :

	1933	1935
Imports (in £ millions) . . . .	11.1	17.7
Exports (in £ millions) . . . .	2.6	4.2
Consumption of Elec. Power (in million K.W.H.) . . . .	22.2	56.8
Government Revenue (in £ millions) . . . .	3.9	5.7
Government Expenditure (in £ millions) . . . . .	2.7	4.2



organized in co-operative enterprises, and Jewish and municipal and self-governing institutions arose almost spontaneously to co-ordinate the confusion.

Almost, but not quite. It was during this stage of mass immigration that the leaders of the Histadrut, the large colonization co-operative, in which three-quarters of all Jewish workers, skilled or unskilled, had become members, emerged as unquestioned leaders of Jewish Palestine. Most of the new-comers were untrained and inexperienced, which gave the Histadrut its great advantage. Tirelessly the Histadrut leaders organized the new-comers, strengthened trade unions and co-operative enterprise, on the whole with striking success, and always with the aim of *creating a firmly-rooted and autonomous Jewish Palestine*. The situation was entirely in their favour : funds, workers, and experts were coming into the country as fast as room could be found for them, only too anxious to be employed. And so, within four years, the Histadrut grew into a close-knit, wealthy body of nearly 100,000 members, aiming entirely at consolidating the new nationalism, cementing the new Jewish Palestine into a miniature but solid national entity.

And the Arabs ? How did they react to their unending rush which was upsetting all that their nationalist leaders had hoped and striven for ?

They did not react quickly. They, too, were bewildered. They saw their social order changing. Willy-nilly they were forced from their feudal agricultural life into a primitive colonial capitalism. And most of them were too busy making money to organize serious resistance.

The vast sums of capital imported by the Jews into Palestine could not be contained by them. Inevitably, offered fabulous prices, large and small Arab land-owners were competing in selling all or part of their land, investing the proceeds, working in all kinds of ways in collaboration with Jews or working against Jews in laying down rival orange groves, and especially in market gardening for the ever-growing urban Jewish zone.

A few figures from those the Palestine Government was now modern enough to collect show the full extent of the change.

In 1931 the Arabs owned 59,000 dunam of citrus groves. In 1935 135,000 dunam, representing an investment of upwards of eight million pounds, and at full bearing a crop of seven million boxes of oranges and grape-fruit. Between 1930 and 1936 the Moslem Arab birth-rate (the Christian Arab minority was always more advanced) rose from 46 to 53 per thousand, the death-rate fell from 28 to 19 per thousand, the infantile mortality rate dropped 50 per cent from 194 to 136 deaths per thousand births, while the Moslem natural increase in 1936 was 26,000, or nearly 5 per cent, an unprecedented natural increase beyond any recorded elsewhere in the contemporary world. And this was not surprising. After all, the scale of Palestine was incongruously tiny, and a primitive population had probably never been so rapidly transformed.

Yet this feverish economic change and capitalist improvement was only one side of the picture. The development was unequal; it was just the feudal strongholds of Arab nationalism, the purely Arab districts, which were left behind, and where jealousy and resentment were proportionately growing. And throughout the din of social change Arab national consciousness was awakening, impelled by fear of the uncanny Jewish immigration from Europe, to which there seemed no end; expressing itself in a hardening of national resistance, which was bringing all sections of Arabs together and rousing the Arab youth.

The first crude result of this—a typically Oriental expression—was a terrorist movement to which, in 1931 and 1932, isolated Jews fell victim. In October 1933 Arab massed demonstrations against Zionism took place, and in contrast to 1929 were at once put down by the military in Jaffa and Jerusalem at the cost of thirty to forty lives of demonstrators. But these were only symptoms. The Arab national movement was already progressing

beyond mass demonstrations, waiting for its opportunity. After the failure of its early primitive terrorism, the Arab youth saw hope in the organization of national scout, youth, and student movements, and a new conscious orientation towards the fascist powers.

And the British? How did they react to the changes which must have been totally unforeseen?

There can be little doubt. Palestine, in British eyes, was a strategic imperial key-point. It is plain that these revolutionary changes, creating both a Jewish and Arab industrial proletariat, increasing the scale of racial conflict, were not desirable. How long could they continue?

There is a certain significant passage in the *Peel Report*:

‘So far from reducing “economic absorptive capacity,” immigration increased it. The more immigrants came in, the more work they created for local industries to meet their needs, especially in building: and more work meant more room for immigrants under the labour schedule. Unless, therefore, the Government adopted a more restrictive policy, and *unless there were some economic or financial setback*, there seemed no reason why the rate of immigration should not go on climbing up and up.’<sup>1</sup>

Britain did not actively impose uneconomic restrictions. As a capitalist power whose own business interests were involved, she could not actively go against capitalist development. Resistance remained passive, but was finally bound to achieve its results. The Palestine Government refused to give any really helpful tariffs to the new Jewish industries. At the same time customs duties of the mere revenue type were kept unnaturally high. Zionist money could not be kept out of the country, but Jewish workers could; and the labour schedules were cut down to the minimum. No help, except on an absurdly niggardly scale, was given to Zionist education or social and economic effort. There was no trace of agricultural reform for the Arab peasantry or of an active development and irrigation

<sup>1</sup> *Peel Report*, p. 85.

plan. The building of vital roads in the citrus belt was inexplicably omitted. Even the main trunk road between Tel Aviv and Haifa remained unbuilt. The British Government had its harbour at Haifa, but Tel Aviv and Jaffa were refused the obviously needed deep-water port. At the same time the Government accumulated the huge revenues it received from taxation of Jewish immigration, and its surplus mounted to four, five, and even six million pounds.

Both Jews and Arabs in this way remained dissatisfied and convinced of British hostility.

The Arabs only saw that under British protection thousands and ever-new thousands of Jewish immigrants were coming into the country and quickly establishing themselves.

The Jews felt that all they had achieved had been entirely by their own unaided effort, that their immigration could have been far larger still but for the policy of the Palestine Government, which was trying passively to keep them back by every means in its power.

But from 1933 to 1935 neither Arab hostility nor British opposition seemed able to influence Jewish immigration in the least.

The spectre of Hitler was rising across the world, creating a Zionist movement over night wherever Jews lived. It was in the spring and early summer months of 1935, in those last few peaceful months of the world before Mussolini shattered world peace for good, that the movement of Jews to Palestine reached its height.

During those months scores of steamships converging upon Haifa and Jaffa brought Jewish immigrants at the rate of 1,500 or 2,000 a week, of whom a good part were 'capitalists,' bringing something between a million and a half and two million pounds a month into the country. They crowded and swarmed: the Jewish towns were a Bedlam of building, Tel Aviv was growing at the rate of a thousand inhabitants a week, flats being unprocurable for weeks ahead, trade was booming, money plentiful, new

industrial and commercial enterprises apparently springing up daily.

Everything was feverish and seemed to proceed at an American rate ; in one district wheat-fields were being turned into orange groves for new investors, at the other end workers were equally busy razing existing orange groves to the ground to make room for building plots.

In the midst of this hectic Jewish rush the British and the Arabs really seemed remote, not mattering. There was an impression—and in Palestine the Jews really believed it—that at last a miracle had happened : the Jewish people in all its millions had gathered up its possessions and was on its way to Palestine. It was just a matter of time and a few practical difficulties. At the offices of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem desperate efforts were being made to guide the flow of men and money which threatened to be overwhelming. At the same time Zionist hopes ran higher than they had ever run before. The prevailing optimism found its voice in the new Zionist leader, Ben Gurion, the Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive and leader of the Jewish Labour Movement. Ben Gurion, a small, sturdy man, with long hair and fanatical eyes, grew messianic. His office room at the Jewish Agency became filled with maps not only of Palestine but of the whole Middle East from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf—the sparsely-populated Arab countries which might all offer scope for the future destiny of the Jewish people.

At the Zionist Congress which was held in Lucerne in August 1935, he stood up before the assembled Zionist delegates to make an extraordinary speech, in which he laid down a Zionist ten-year plan for the immigration of one million Jewish families, five million people all together.

Such immigration, of course, could never be confined to Palestine alone. The whole Middle East, as Ben Gurion saw it, was destined to be the stage of the new Jewish renaissance. He was ready for this :

PLATE III. JEWISH CHILDREN IN PALESTINE



*Top Row (from left to right): Boys from Turkestan, Poland, Greece*

*Bottom Row (from left to right): Boy from Caucasus, girl from Germany, and Palestine-born boy*



'The borders of Palestine do not stretch from Dan to Beer-sheba ; they stretch at least another 250 kilometres south to the last corners of Palestine. The Red Sea has played a great role in Jewish history. The age of Solomon witnessed the first attempt to create a Jewish fleet, but not with Jewish sailors. We must not let ourselves be guided by temporary fluctuations, but keep to this historical line. Our economy, agricultural as well as industrial, which we have chiefly based upon the home market of Eretz Israel, must discover its economic connection with the great hinterland of Palestine, that is with Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Persia, perhaps even with India. We must free ourselves from the artificial route of the Suez Canal and find our own way to the countries of Asia.

'But in order to fulfil such gigantic cultural and economic plans, to change the nature of an entire people and the character of an entire country, to intensify agriculture and create new industries, and to settle the first million Jewish families, gigantic amounts of capital are needed. If one counts on only £250 per family, each one can reckon up himself the sum necessary to fulfil our great work.'

that is, two hundred and fifty million pounds in order to create a new Jewish empire of millions of people, spreading irresistibly over the whole Middle East.

Solomon, quoted in Ben Gurion's speech, could only have had small ambitions compared with Ben Gurion.

It was fantastic, part of that strange world of unreality in which Zionists lived and from which they even drew their strength. For the third time Zionist hopes were crushed just after reaching a high point. Three weeks after Ben Gurion's speech Mussolini, engaged in the Abyssinian conquest, shattered the political balance of the world by challenging British power and showing it up as vulnerable. Brand-new Italian submarines and aeroplanes threatened, and the invincible British Navy retreated from Malta. For a few days war seemed a possibility.

In Palestine, as in all Mediterranean countries, financial panic broke out and created an economic paralysis. In a single week the Palestine prosperity vanished, the banks



were calling in loans, 5,000 Jews were unemployed in Tel Aviv, and the hollowness of the whole position in Palestine had been shown up.

A squadron of British destroyers arrived in Haifa harbour. A new phase of history had begun for Palestine.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE END OF A PHASE

**I**F Ben Gurion had really wanted an historical parallel, instead of quoting King Solomon he might have reflected about the end of the kingdom of Israel, placed so precariously between the Egyptian and Assyrian empires.

In September the whole Jewish boom had collapsed so suddenly that the situation seemed catastrophic. For a week building was at a standstill, and there was an uncanny silence in the streets of Tel Aviv and the Jewish quarters of Haifa and Jerusalem.

The collapse was not due to direct economic causes. Immigration of the kind that was going on could not be cut off so suddenly. Thousands of Jewish immigrants had already liquidated their business affairs in Europe and were on the way to Palestine, and for four or five months they still came pouring into Palestine in hardly diminished numbers, bringing their capital with them ; large British financial institutions like Barclays Bank and the Prudential Assurance Company, which had already invested a good deal in Jewish Palestine, were still there to continue such business.

The collapse was far more psychological, based on the realization that the whole balance of power in the Mediterranean had been overthrown, and that a new historical period had begun, leading to a future ominously unknown.

In Palestine the Zionists since the War had relied entirely upon the impregnability of British rule. Now Britain was suddenly shown to be no longer all-powerful in the Mediter-

anean. What then? It was better not to think of possibilities! Because the crisis was psychological its first shock was the worst. The first frightened days of tension in the Mediterranean passed. Slowly the continued immigration of the new investors and consumers had its effect and the economic situation of Jewish Palestine improved. A smaller Labour Schedule, 3,250 certificates for September 1935–April 1936, as compared with 8,000 for the previous half-year, helped to keep down the number of unemployed. But, in spite of economic revival, a very considerable nucleus of Jewish unemployed remained, and confidence had been badly shaken.

Once again, in this crisis the Zionist leaders demonstrated their qualities of tenacity and courageous optimism. The whole Jewish prosperity had been based largely upon an influx of new and ever-new immigrants. There could be no halting now. Immediate stoppage would be disastrous. Almost everything depended upon keeping up the Zionist *mystique* and Zionist psychology. Jewish Palestine was weak, a small island of not quite 400,000 people, surrounded by Arab enmity and perhaps the hostility of the British Government as well. A favourable factor was that Jewish Palestine was not yet purely capitalist—money was not concentrated but split up among innumerable small owners, shopkeepers, small business men, and the like, each with his small capital, and therefore able to keep going for some time. Another favourable factor was the flow of money for national institutions from Jews outside, which still came undiminished into the country. This national money could help on the fringes of colonization, though it could not keep a community of 400,000 people alive. But for the moment these funds were exploited to the utmost in tiding over the immediate financial crisis and in encouraging private enterprise, either by definite subsidies or by support from Zionist banks like the Anglo-Palestine Bank or the Workers' Co-operative Bank, which had already grown into financial institutions of considerable scale.

The lead in all this effort was taken by the Jewish Labour

Federation, the Histadrut, which, with its hundred thousand enrolled members (half the adult Jewish population) and its network of co-operative institutions with their turnover of millions of pounds a year, had become the economic keystone of Jewish Palestine.

Its leaders, passionate Zionists, veterans of the 1905 immigration from Russia, fought more than anybody against the dangers of unemployment. Jobs were split up ; through spreading available work over a sufficient number of workers working three or four days a week, total unemployment was largely diminished. But the discipline of the Histadrut went even further. In March 1936 every Histadrut worker was required to subscribe the equivalent of twelve days' wages to a central unemployment fund of the Histadrut. The Jewish workers tightened their belts, cut their wages, and paid their contribution. Nearly a hundred thousand pounds were collected in this way, and, through skilful manipulation of credit, used to start quite a large public works programme. The moral effect was also considerable. But at the same time this voluntary unemployment drive was a *tour de force*—and as such it could hardly be repeated.

The Jewish labour leaders knew already that the fate of their little community in Palestine was being decided by far greater political forces, against whom such effort could be of little avail.

The world had so long been accustomed to the strength of the British Empire, that the fact that it could be challenged was staggering ; but once the challenge had been delivered the Empire's weakness seemed overwhelming. A German military expert wrote :

' Britain has immense resources and great military strength, but has to defend them all over the world against possible simultaneous attack.

' At the present time Britain depends more than any other state on treaty undertakings and less on military power, and in a world of highly armed states this may be disastrous.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Deutsche Wehr*, German military journal, 7 May 1936.

This is just what it did turn out to be. As the same observer goes on :

‘ The British Navy, hitherto thought invincible, was terrorized by the Italian Air Fleet in the Mediterranean, which was in control of the situation throughout the Abyssinian conflict.’

When Mussolini answered the British sanctions policy by throwing four mechanized motor divisions to the Libyan-Egyptian frontier, Britain only had her scantily-equipped Egyptian garrisons available for defence, and could not have stopped an immediate advance upon Egypt and the Suez Canal.

So dramatic was this revelation of British weakness, that the French Government of Laval, itself close to fascism, almost abandoned the post-War Franco-British friendship and the entire League of Nations policy which had been its window-dressing, in favour of a fascist alliance.

The first effect on British Government circles and the British ruling class, too, was one of panic, which saw the only safety—for the greatest enemy was revolution which, if successful in any one country, might spread right across Europe—in a complete rearmament plan of the entire empire and accommodation with the conquering fascist powers.

But the vital need, after the Abyssinian debacle, was to gain time, and it was obvious that in the interval minor concessions would have to be granted, particularly where demanded by colonial peoples.

The first effect was shown in Egypt.

Since the War Britain had held down Egyptian nationalism in an unequal struggle of military forces against an unarmed people. In 1928 the British Government had still been able to say that the unilateral British Declaration of 1922, which 95 per cent of the Egyptian people had never accepted,

‘ embodies the conditions subject to which independence was accorded to Egypt, and His Majesty’s Government will not permit it to be either modified or disregarded.’

In 1951 negotiations, started between Arthur Henderson, one of the few European politicians of any imagination, and Zaghlul Pasha, were brought to an abrupt close by the National Government. This was short-sighted even from the narrowest imperialist point of view. Egypt was already a country of sixteen million people, and Cairo, with a million and a half, had become the largest city in the Mediterranean. Even if the great majority of the Egyptian country-side consisted of illiterate and passive fellaheen, a considerable Egyptian middle class had sprung up in the cities. Because of the degrading political position of Egypt under foreign rule and foreign privileges, this new middle class had become the spearhead of a nationalist movement which was steadily making all Egypt political.

The schools and universities in particular had been turning out a noisy but passionately nationalist Egyptian youth, which saw no reason why leading Government positions should be held by foreigners. The rise of fascist movements in Europe provided an obvious model of semi-military sports and youth organizations.

The extent of these developments was hardly realized in Britain. In November 1935 Samuel Hoare, the unfortunate representative of British foreign policy, could still say in answer to new Egyptian demands :

“When we have been consulted, we have advised against the re-enactment of the constitutions of 1923 and 1930, since the one was proved unworkable and the other universally unpopular.”<sup>1</sup>

But the consequences of this refusal were startling. Two weeks later all Egyptian opposition parties had formed a united front, and submitted a note to Britain signed by every Egyptian politician of any importance emphasizing that co-operation with Great Britain on the Abyssinian issue provided an excellent opportunity for concluding a treaty defining a sufficient degree of Egyptian independence. Independently, a youthful ‘blue-shirt’ army, organized

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, November 11, 1935.

by the Egyptian nationalists on fascist lines, appeared in the streets of Cairo and Alexandria, and in February 1936, at a time when Anglo-Italian tension was growing, rioting broke out all over Egypt.

It was rioting of a sufficiently ugly character to give the local British officials a thorough fright. Fascist organization was easy. Why should the sub-machine gun—that weapon of modern civil war—not be brought into play?

Samuel Hoare had already fallen on the ice at St. Moritz and vanished temporarily from the Foreign Office. Anthony Eden, hastily called in as his successor to try a new line of conciliation, could not agree fast enough to all the main Egyptian demands, the recognition of Egyptian independence, the progressive abolition of foreign privileges, which were all formerly granted at the Montreux Conference and followed by Egypt's entry into the League of Nations (or what survived of it) in the spring of 1937.

When Nahas Pasha, nationalist leader and first Prime Minister of the new Egypt, returned from Montreux, crowds estimated at three hundred thousand in Alexandria and Cairo received him with a mad enthusiasm which might have convinced Samuel Hoare that constitutional government was not unpopular in Egypt.

After Egypt, Syria.

Syria, occupied by the French since 1921, could not, of course, compare with Egypt in wealth or population or importance. In fact, under French rule and in contrast with Egypt and Palestine, Syria had hardly developed at all. In 1935 it was still sparsely populated and poor; compared to Cairo and Alexandria, Damascus and Beirut had remained provincial towns. Yet Syrian nationalism burnt with as fierce a flame as any in the Arab world, and it was from Damascus, which Lawrence and Feisul had chosen as the capital of their mythical united Arab state, that the Arabs in 1924-5 staged their greatest military revolt against the European militarism.

The French policy of 'assimilation,' significantly successful in Algiers, Tunis, and Morocco, had failed completely against the Arabs.

To the French colonial rulers the country was a suitable training-ground for a colonial army kept for overseas service, but partly living on Syria, and a crushing burden on a poor population. The population of Syria was only double that of Palestine and Transjordan, yet the French forces in the Levant were fifteen times larger than the British, totalling 50,000 to 60,000 troops.

Discontent simmered and was never quite put down. The history of Syria was far more stormy than that of Palestine (indeed, what is not generally realized Palestine has been statistically the least disturbed of the post-War Arab countries). The Syrian Arabs were bitterly discontented, because in 1928 Iraq already became an independent state. Of course, this independence was partly fictitious; but it did mean that the Arab ruling class of Baghdad enjoyed a position and power of government which the same class in Damascus and Beirut lacked. But the deepest political discontent in 1935 and 1936 arose because Syria was tied to the French financial system, and suffered like France herself from the misguided wave of deflation carried on by the financial rulers of France. In this sense the Syrian national uprising of 1936 was part of the same movement that led to the great wave of French strikes. The widespread economic stagnation produced by French policy was made even more desperate by the collapse of the tourist trade, one of Syria's main industries.

So great was this discontent that not even the large colonial army could keep the Arab population quiet. As soon as the Abyssinian tension seemed to give them their opportunity, the nationalist leaders in Damascus struck. On the Egyptian model, national independence for Syria was demanded. When the French Colonial Office refused, Damascus declared a general strike which, to the surprise of the French, spread to the entire Christian and Moslem



population of the country. The French Colonial Government, headed by a particularly brusque and unpopular High Commissioner, de Martel, waited. But the strike showed no signs of ending. In the fifth and sixth weeks shooting began. On the fiftieth day of the strike the French capitulated. Arab demands were to be granted in principle. A Syrian deputation was invited to come to Paris to discuss the granting of Syrian independence in a spirit of friendly co-operation between the two peoples.

This independence did not amount to very much ; a year later the Arab Government at Damascus was hopelessly impoverished, unable to overcome provincial separatism, Turkey, hostile to the Arab revival, had already as good as regained Alexandretta ; only French forces were, by the Arabs' own request, able to keep order. But this was in 1937, when Arab nationalism, partly broken, was already receding again. Yet an advance had been made ; something had been gained.

After the Arab successes in Egypt and Syria, a nationalist move in Palestine was inevitable.

But in Palestine, where the Jewish minority had rapidly grown so strong, the struggle took a different line, and could not lead to a quick decision, if only because it was threefold, not twofold, as in Egypt and Syria.

The most urgent reason for an Arab uprising in Palestine in 1935-6 was that of opportunity. Jewish wealth and Jewish mass immigration, which previously had seemed uncanny and irresistible, were suddenly broken and revealed as vulnerable. The swift economic crisis, hitting the Arabs too, had created a mass discontent which could be exploited. And the startling revelation that the British Empire was not an impersonal, invulnerable force, showed that a new opportunity of wresting concessions had arisen.

The Palestine Arabs themselves had changed. They had become more urbanized, as in Egypt and Syria. Above all, the leaders had a new educated and highly inflammable youth behind them. The ideal of Germany and Italy beckoned. Semi-fascist organizations on the successful

Egyptian and Syrian models were the new aim. But most of all, after so many failures, the new political opportunity provided the stimulus for Arab nationalism. The Arabs, as Lawrence says, 'could be swung on an idea as on a cord ; for the unpledged allegiance of their minds made them obedient servants. None of them would escape the bond until success had come, and with it responsibility and duty and engagements. Then the idea was gone and the work ended—in ruins.' For the Arabs the early part of 1936, during Anglo-Italian tension, was the period of the idea—the idea of national independence engendered by opportunity. Already in 1934 and 1935 the jealous and bickering family groups which had formed the Arab leadership had turned into three definite political parties : that of the Mufti, representing extreme nationalism of an uncompromising and negative Semitic type ; that of the Arab Defence Party under the Mufti's lifelong personal opponent, Nashashibi, more moderate and willing to treat with the British and Zionists ; and that of the Istiklal, supporting Arab unity and linked to the independent Arab rulers of Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Early in 1936 these Arab parties formed a united front, like the Egyptians and the Syrians, and put their usual demands to the British Government—the immediate stoppage of all Jewish immigration and independent democratic Arab government of Palestine.

These were the demands put forward by the Arab leaders since 1918 at regular intervals ; but this time they were more than formal. The mass of the articulate Arab population and the Arab youth stood solidly behind them.

As the *Peel Report* stated :

' Towards the end of 1935 the younger elements had everywhere gained ground, and were becoming a factor which might challenge the influence of the older Arab leaders ' (p. 87).

But among all classes of Arabs, older leaders and youth, genuine fear of a Jewish majority had become the dominant motive, introducing a desperate mood that the Arabs must fight now or never.

With this mood about, it needed only an incident to light the flames, and this incident was provided by a case of allegedly Jewish arms smuggling which came to light in October 1935.

A shipment of cement barrels consigned to a Tel Aviv addressee was being unloaded in Jaffa Harbour when one of the barrels fell, broke open, and was shown to be full of ammunition. By the time the startled customs officials had examined all the barrels, they had collected three hundred and fifty-nine drums of arms, containing 254 Mauser pistols with affixable butts, 90 revolvers, 500 bayonets, 400,000 rounds of ammunition.

No trace of the consignee in Tel Aviv was, of course, discovered, but it was obvious that this was not an isolated shipment but part of a general Jewish plan of armaments for self-defence. Seizing upon this incident, and upon the inability of the British police to discover the slightest trace of the smugglers, the Arab Press engaged in nation-wide agitation against the Jews, who, it was claimed, were planning to conquer the country by arms and exterminate the Arabs while the British Government was conniving at such schemes.

The discovery of such dangerous and modern armaments as Mauser pistols with affixable butts, almost miniature machine-guns, had also given the British furiously to think. The British position in the Mediterranean at the moment was precarious enough ; there were no forces available for a diversion in Palestine.

The British High Commissioner for Palestine, who had been in the country since 1931, and was now faced with crucial difficulties, was an ex-soldier, Sir Arthur Wauchope, a frail, elderly Scotsman, and as curious a figure as any that passed across the Palestinian stage.

A semi-retired general, living a solitary bachelor life, with a passion for music (gratified by Jewish artists) and for simple country life (represented by the struggling Arab villagers and farmers), with a genuine hatred of bloodshed and force and an elderly bachelor's intense

desire to end his days pleasantly, to be loved ; at the same time wilfully innocent in his belief that he could solve burning racial and political conflicts with a little goodwill, a few minor reforms and concessions : it would have been difficult for the British to find a man less suited to hold an imperial key position at a period of acute political tension and change.

Was it that Wauchope belonged to the somnolent and secure phase of British post-War imperialism ? His successor, transferred directly from similar overlordship in Tanganyika, was a very different type of man, in no way departing from the framework of British colonial rule, more in keeping with the British imperialist spirit of the last two years.

In the Great War, Wauchope, as officer in the Black Watch, had distinguished himself in France and Mesopotamia, but it seems his experiences had a shattering effect upon him. As he once wrote :

‘ Surely the world offers no scene more pitiful than that of a battlefield after action. I know, by personal experience, the suffering entailed in lying day and night untended with broken limbs, the utter weariness from wounds, and the exhaustion after conflict—the tragedy of all surrounding the cries of those who call for help that never comes, a passionate longing for death alternating with a craven fear of foe and wandering marauder, and, above all, the horror of the great vultures, winging round and round in ever closer circles.’<sup>1</sup>

These experiences had apparently inspired him as an elderly general with such horror of war that he was unable to sanction the use of force even when it was obvious that inaction would equally mean further casualties.

In the explosive atmosphere of Palestine politics such weakness was fatal. Almost from the beginning of his office (though in the rush of prosperity this was hidden) Wauchope made mistakes, well-intentioned though he was.

In 1953 Arab demonstrations against German-Jewish immigrants were at once stopped by force ; though this

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Arnold Wilson’s *Loyalties*, 1936, Volume I, p. 246.

decision may have been due to a subordinate official, it earned him violent unpopularity among the Arabs. Immigration restrictions, imposed—ineffectively—in 1934–5, exasperated the Zionists, who already thought victory in sight, without appeasing the Arabs. Nor did his proposals for agricultural reform quieten Arab discontent. Little impression was made when, in return for handing over the concession for draining the Huleh Basin (the upper Jordan valley, an ancient fertile area) to Zionist colonization bodies, these had to contract to hand over one-third of the drained, ameliorated area for Arab settlement. The Huleh plan might be an excellent example of theoretical Zionist colonization; a large marshy wasteland would be reclaimed for intensive irrigated agriculture, and room would be found for both Zionist colonists and thousands of Arab settlers in the place of the miserable squatters and Beduin living on the edge of a malarial swamp. But the Arab nationalists were concentrated in the towns, led by the Husseinis and a few other families who owned hundreds of thousands of dunams of land, who were out for power and rule over all Palestine, and utterly uninterested in the creation of free Arab peasant proprietors. Any Zionist advance was a defeat for them!

In October Wauchope attended a Zionist dinner in London, making what the Arabs claimed to be a pro-Zionist speech. Close on the heels of this excitement came the discovery of the smuggled arms consignment at Jaffa. Under the cloak of having to defend themselves against imminent Jewish armed attack, a passionate campaign of incitement was launched in the Arab Press. Wauchope, returning from London in November, was greeted by a one-day protest strike, observed willingly or under threat throughout Palestine. Arab youth and scout troops were openly preparing arms and talking insurrection.

In December an Arab terrorist band under a notorious sheikh, Izzed al Qassam, came into conflict with the police, and five members of the band, including the Sheikh, were killed. Immediately the five men became Arab martyrs

and were given mass funerals. The atmosphere became explosive.

This was too much. Wauchope made yet another effort, a genuine effort on his part, to appease the Arab nationalists by concessions. Already in December 1955 he had announced plans for the establishment of a Legislative Council. As usual in the troubled atmosphere of Palestine, nothing had come of the plans, but in answer to the Arab memorandum to London, he agreed that the political regime must be changed, and proposed three concessions :

(1) A new Government statistical bureau was to be set up which, the Arabs were told, would in future regulate Jewish immigration 'scientifically' in accordance with the economic absorptive capacity of Palestine.

(2) Except in special areas, the citrus belt, urban land, etc., no Jewish land purchases would be authorized until Arab peasants on such land had been assured of a minimum subsistence area.

(3) A Legislative Council was to be set up to enable the people of the country to take part in its government. This council would have twenty-eight members, of whom five would be British officials. Of the remaining twenty-three members, eleven would be nominated by the Government and twelve were to be elected, and the twenty-three were to be composed of fourteen Arabs, seven Jews and two 'representatives of commercial interests.' The President of the Council would be a senior British official and have a casting vote. The aim was transparent. By allying themselves with one side or the other British representatives would always be able to outvote both the Arabs and the Jews.

The function accorded to the Council was equally curious. It could debate upon and criticize all Government bills, but it would only sit half the year, and there was nothing to prevent the High Commissioner from passing through all necessary legislation during the remaining six months. At the same time, the burning political questions of the country, the extent of Jewish immigration, land purchase

and Arab national rights, were to be outside the scope of the Council. No wonder that it seemed a strange and superfluous body, and that Winston Churchill asked with surprise in Parliament : ' Is this the new Liberalism ? '

In 1923, still contemptuous of Zionist strength, the Arabs had already rejected a similar Legislative Council which the Zionists had then accepted. But in 1936 the position was entirely changed. In 1923 the Arabs had not taken Zionism seriously and had refused the Legislative Council as a trick to deny them self-government. But in 1936 they regarded their struggle as one of life and death against Zionism. Any concession of self-government, any public platform, was at least one step forward in their struggle for political rights.

For the same reason the proposal aroused the vehement opposition of the Zionists. The Council would be only a mockery of self-government, as they knew ; they simply saw in it a platform from which the Arab leadership would send out inflammable speeches to the Arab masses and to the whole of the surrounding Arab countries.

And yet the curious thing was that certain realist Zionist leaders, like Weizman and Ben Gurion, were prepared to accept the scheme under certain conditions. They were for acceptance, because, curiously enough, there was something in Wauchope's scheme. It was quite obvious ; something had to be done. The Arabs were aroused ; the present political situation, denying them all political rights, could not be continued. How could some balance between the two peoples in the same country be found ? For all its disadvantages, the Legislative Council would at least create a joint platform ; it might satisfy many Arabs by giving them the official position they desired, and in any case it would be at least a known evil. But here the Jews went frantically against their own interests. The Zionist leaders did not dare announce this view. For so long had the Zionist masses in Palestine and abroad been drilled into the belief that Palestine belonged to the Jews by historical right, and that the Arabs were corrupt and

incapable of self-government, that now they did not dare to agree publicly to a scheme which would show up the hollowness of this whole position. Zionist policy in Palestine and abroad therefore took up the line of unqualified opposition to the Council as an infringement upon Jewish rights, which really meant opposition to any self-government in Palestine which would give the Arab majority the slightest majority rights—an uncompromising attitude, in its way as sterile as that of the Mufti. But the Jews would have nothing else. The Council might prove a weapon against immigration. And how, in view of the Jewish plight abroad, could they countenance this? In February 1936 the Jewish Agency in Palestine, supported even by anti-Zionists, announced its categorical refusal to consider the proposed Legislative Council.

But the proposed Council was killed not in Palestine but at Westminster, where Government-sponsored proposals could seldom have met such unanimous opposition in the Houses of Lords and Commons.

Wauchope's Council was opposed by the Liberal and Labour spokesmen, coached by the Zionists, who claimed it was merely a convenient instrument for liquidating the National Home.

The Legislative Council proposal was equally opposed by the bulk of the Tory imperialists, who might countenance 'clearing out,' but opposed all democratic concessions to a colonial people, particularly giving a public platform to a dangerous man like the Mufti, who was openly attacking British interests.

On a small scale the Palestine issue was a parallel case to that of the Hoare-Laval proposals. Once again British public opinion protested against concessions granted by an apparently weak British Government. It showed how much even Conservative political opinion in Britain was not in the confidence of the Government and out of touch with realities, because the real reason for giving concessions to the Arabs—the extreme delicacy of the Mediterranean situation—could, of course, not be divulged.



It was a pity. As the British Government, Sir Arthur Wauchope, and even Zionist leaders like Weizman knew, the Legislative Council might, with skilful management, have provided a safety-valve. As it was, the Parliamentary debates, demonstrating British hostility, provoked unprecedented bitterness and despair among the Arab nationalists, who had been assured by the High Commissioner (who had probably been assured in his turn by the National Government) that they would receive at least this concession, and who now really began to believe that British politics were entirely subservient to the Jews.

It was at this time, too, that Italian blandishments and promises daily broadcast in Arabic from the Bari Radio Station were making themselves felt in the country.

Wauchope and the Colonial Office, trying to repair the damage and restrain the Arab leaders, hastily proposed another way out ; an Arab delegation should proceed to London to lay the Arab case before the British Government. But it was too late. The Mufti and his friends were not fools. Mussolini seemed to be harassing the British. The Syrian and Egyptian example was plain before their eyes. Before the delegation could sail they struck.

Their method was the time-honoured one of the East. Anti-Jewish incitement, stories of religious sacrilege, rumours of Arabs killed by Jews in Tel Aviv, were sedulously circulated among the masses. Bandits and scout groups were given arms. On April 15 three Jews were killed by Arab 'nationalist' highwaymen, who did not injure the non-Jewish travellers.

On the next day the funeral procession of the three victims attracted great crowds in Tel Aviv, including many hot-tempered Levantine and Greek Jews—one of the victims had been a well-to-do Salonika merchant—some of whom raised cries of 'Murder !' and 'To Jaffa !' whereupon the procession was dispersed by a strong guard of British police after a brief scuffle of a few minutes.

On the same afternoon two Arabs were found dead near

the scene of the hold-up, an obvious act of individual reprisal.

This was sufficient material for the Arab leaders. A day later—it was a Sunday morning—the Jaffa port workers, at least half of them illiterate immigrants from Hauran, were worked up to a final pitch of rage by reports that three Hauranis had been cut to pieces in Tel Aviv. Early in the morning excited Arab mobs in the port area fell upon isolated Jewish passers-by and, of those who could not escape, sixteen were massacred.

The British police, always inefficiently informed, were once again taken by surprise, and once again only intervened too late. By the time reinforcements arrived most of the killing was over, and when the Arab mobs were dispersed, several Arabs were killed and more wounded.

At once the Arab leadership met and formed itself into an ‘Arab Higher Committee,’ in which all parties were represented, and declared a general strike, to which most of the excited Arab populace immediately responded.

The famous ‘Palestine Disturbances’ of 1936 had begun. They were to continue, on a steadily growing scale, for the whole summer.

## CHAPTER XV

### NON-INTERVENTION IN PALESTINE

**T**HE odd thing about the disturbances was how, beginning on a relatively small scale, they grew and grew in dimension.

During the first weeks, in April, an Arab protest strike had been proclaimed, partially successful; there was sporadic shooting here and there, supported by childish acts such as nails strewn on roads, and stoning of Jewish cars and buses.

Five months after the first disturbance a British force of no less than thirty thousand (twenty-four thousand regular troops and the rest Palestine police and Jewish supernumeraries) was engaged with the help of tanks, machine-guns, and aeroplanes in regular pitched battles during rounding-up operations against bands of Arabs from Palestine and elsewhere, well armed, a thousand to two thousand strong, commanded in their guerrilla campaign by Fauzi Kawkaji, a Syrian ex-officer in the Turkish Army, exiled by the French for his share in the 1925 Syria rebellion.

In April neither the British and the Jews, nor the Arabs themselves, remotely suspected such a development. Three days after the strike had been proclaimed, the newspaper of the Mufti declared boastfully that the Arabs of Palestine would, if necessary, maintain the strike for three weeks.

Who was to blame for this long struggle? According to the Jews, the weakness of the British administration. But the policy of the Jews themselves was much the same, due to the fatal political miscalculation of the Zionist leaders.

Really, in one way the course of the riots was strange, and typical of the Palestine situation.

Although the Palestine-Jewish Press, with a touch of Ghetto hysteria, called them such, the disturbances were no pogroms. In Palestine the Jews were neither weak nor unarmed, and defended themselves with outstanding success. In 1936 they already numbered 400,000 as against 920,000 Arabs; they were better organized than the Arabs, probably better armed, certainly much better fed and housed, with more motor cars, telephones, etc., at their disposal. The Arabs had the strategic advantage in that they were spread all over the country, the Jews countered it by being so concentrated that, wherever they lived, almost without exception they were the majority. Theoretically, if the British had been unable to interfere, Jewish-Arab fighting should almost at once have reached deadlock: the Jews could not have kept communications open, least of all in the Arab hill districts; the Arabs would have had to evacuate every Jewish neighbourhood.

That not even a brief semblance of such a struggle occurred in 1936 was mainly due to Zionist policy.

The Zionists had been anxiously and uneasily watching the mounting British difficulties in the early part of 1936 in the Mediterranean. Yet when the blow fell and the Palestine Arabs engaged in strike and riot, not only against the Jews but against the British Government of Palestine, at first something almost like a feeling of elation passed through the ranks of Jewish politicians. Even now the Zionist outlook was coloured by a messianic optimism, which regarded Zionism as foreordained, bound in spite of all obstacles to be fulfilled. This optimism had been transferred to British-Zionist relations. British officials in Palestine might sabotage the Zionist effort, but fundamentally British and Zionist interests in Palestine went together. The Balfour Declaration had expressed one such community of interests. Now another opportunity had arisen. Faced with Arab enmity and Jewish loyalty at a critical stage of her own affairs, Britain must surely realize

the value of a Jewish alliance and strengthen it. Frantic orders were at once given out by the Jewish Agency that there must be no Jewish reprisals, so that the Jews would stand out as the supporters of law and order in Palestine. For the first few days the order to Jews was to fire only in defence of life, not of property—an order only withdrawn after thousands of valuable Jewish orange trees had been uprooted by Arabs. As against this, the Jewish Press began an incessant clamouring for the *official* arming of Jews. At the same time a strange, almost religious, regard for Jewish self-restraint arose among the Jewish population, and incidentally was advertised loudly by Zionist propaganda to the British in Jerusalem and London and to the outside world.

In the meantime Ben Gurion, Zionist leader in Palestine, who—in this startling new time of sudden crisis and change and everything possible—had again become messianic, flew to London to offer the British Government an army of 50,000 efficient and loyal Jews to keep order in Palestine and the surrounding Arab districts, as prelude to the permanent strengthening of Britain's position in the Eastern Mediterranean by the colonization of Jews on a large scale.

There was little *Realpolitik* behind this calculation: Britain's was the largest Moslem empire in the world, and for seventeen years British policy in Palestine had shown clearly that while the Jewish minority in Palestine was useful from many aspects, Britain had no intention of sacrificing good relations with the large and strategically vital Arab countries in order to stake everything on the Jews. Ben Gurion's proposition was thus not a rational political calculation, but part of the messianic Zionist hope. Such hope had been one of the chief sources of the strength of Zionism from its early small beginnings. Only this time it prevented the Jews from taking the most effective course, by causing them to snatch at illusions.

Because, curiously enough, while it was argued against retaliation that by restraint and pro-British loyalty infinitely

more might be achieved, the second argument against retaliation was—fear of British hostility ; not an unfounded fear, because the Palestine Government, witness its attitude in 1929 or the distorted telegrams sent to London on the day of the Jaffa massacre, had consistently pursued a policy of ‘ non-differentiation ’ between Jews and Arabs, between the attackers and attacked, merging them all as ‘ disturbers.’

Should the Jews take the law into their own hands and fight back, so the argument ran, the British Government would at once take its long-awaited opportunity of suppressing Jew and Arabs alike ; in the ensuing settlement both sides would be equally punished, and nothing was more dangerous to Zionism than that the *status quo* should be changed, immigration stopped, the Mandate questioned. But the conciliatory attitude of the British, and the strength of the Arab revolt, should have made it plain that this would happen in any case. Only when the decisive stage arrived, it arrived for the Jews after a whole year of disturbances and retrogression had rendered their economic and political position infinitely weaker than in the spring of 1936.

Equally, had the Jews shown their strength, had the British had cause to feel as uneasy about Tel Aviv as they did about Jaffa, had the Jews in Haifa and elsewhere clearly shown their potential power to the hard-pressed British Empire, there can be no doubt that they would have obtained far more in the subsequent bargaining. Because, on the face of it, it must have seemed to any British colonial administrator that here were the Arabs, violently discontented and hostile, and therefore to be placated by concession ; and the Jews, loyal under all conditions, and so needing no concessions.

Probably, however, Jewish self-restraint was mainly due, not to these two contradictory political calculations, but to the age-old tradition that Jews avoided bloodshed and did not fight, but tried to raise a moral outcry, appealed to their fellow Jews in other countries, above all, appealed

to the Government, to the police, and this not in Poland, where they were weak, but even in Palestine, where they were strong, and where the Zionist Labour newspaper, *Davar*, instead of threatening the Arabs with reprisals, appealed on the second day of the disturbances for the British to send aeroplanes to deal with the situation !

It was a tradition difficult to break (though nothing to do with bravery), and after a time politically impossible to break, so that the Jews, who had advertised their moral self-restraint, had walked into a trap of their own making. Because the British Government, of course, not only refused to consider Ben Gurion's army ; they even, in spite of Jewish restraint, refused in practice to make any difference between Arab attackers and plunderers, and Jews acting in legitimate self-defence. And while a number of Jewish auxiliary policemen, whose training and discipline made them extremely useful, were armed, it was always in insufficient numbers and always too late to have a real effect. And so the disturbances dragged on, with Arabs all over Palestine attacking and shooting from ambush, and Jews defending themselves, and the whole country plunged into disturbance and insecurity, until slowly the lifeblood of the Jewish (and Arab) prosperity of 1935 was utterly drained away, and Jews and Arabs had, without actual war and under a British Government, fanatically fought each other to a standstill.

On both sides there was something relentless, heroic even, in the struggle ; a queer, distorted struggle fought out in the shadow of a far greater one for Mediterranean control.

For several months both sides surpassed themselves. While the Jewish leaders called for restraint, the Jewish population as a whole responded magnificently to siege conditions. The Jewish self-defence functioned everywhere. No Jewish settlement was ever taken or abandoned. In fact, it was convincingly shown that Arab bands, armed with rifles, even if a hundred or two hundred strong, stood little chance of invading an organized Jewish settled point.

The Jewish drivers' co-operatives made it a point of honour to keep communications open, driving their buses and taxis with convoys or without, and the Jewish population, keyed up to a high pitch, followed their example. On the 'economic front' the Jews stood firm. Refugees were housed and fed; a lighter port was built at Tel Aviv almost overnight in answer to the Jaffa riots. The Levant Fair in Tel Aviv was by a special effort opened in time. For a while the whole of Jewish life went with a swing until, gradually, as the days of the disturbances lengthened into weeks and the weeks into dreary months, economic paralysis crept in.

The Arabs, too, were heroic in Arab fashion. Stirred by national passion and optimism, the Arab youth and middle class made real sacrifices in the national cause. Not only bandits and professional fighters but young villagers and townsmen left to join the bands in the hills, taking their burial shrouds and swearing to die rather than return if victory over the British and Zionists was not won. On the whole they were poor fighters, even on a guerrilla scale, suffering cruelly from machine-gunning aeroplanes. But in spite of their defeats, encouraged by the 'restraint' of the Jews and inexplicable British passivity, they kept on, creating economic insecurity and maintaining a reign of terror and sub-rebellion for six months, long enough to change the political face of Palestine.

As usual in Palestine, plentiful propaganda was made on both sides during the struggle.

According to the Palestine Arab spokesmen, the Arab masses were once again spontaneously and despairingly fighting for national liberty and against British imperialists and Zionist oppression.

The Zionist attack was against the British Government in the hands of anti-Jewish officials, who had permitted a small group of reckless Arab terrorists to declare a reign of terror against the Jews and the unwilling majority of the Arab people.

Each version was only a half-truth. Not a handful of



terrorist reactionaries, but most of the Arab middle class and the entire dissatisfied and fascist-minded Arab youth, stirred by fear of the Jews to new national consciousness, stood behind the rebellion. But equally, these nationally articulate Arabs were only a minority led by reactionary elements, Arab landowners, lawyers, money-lending interests, who in their search for power never for a moment considered the interests of the fellaheen whom they terrorized and incited.

And the British? What stood behind the strange British weakness, the absence of any policy, which let riot and disorder develop for six months and British prestige in the Middle East drop lower than ever before?

The mystery is partially explained because British imperial policy was divided, as always, on the Palestine issue. In London, where the Zionists had considerable influence, the bulk of the Conservative Party and business interests were vaguely pro-Zionist. The Colonial Office was, above all, anxious to avoid anything which might cause troubles to spread flaring across the Middle East. In Palestine the majority of the British officials were distinctly pro-Arab, even including Wauchope. Wauchope was no vulgar anti-Semite; he is a member of the upper class, and the disease flourishes lower down the social scale; but he was a weak man anxious to rule through concessions, and it was the Arabs who had now to be placated. A smaller group of officials, particularly two or three Irishmen who seemed to have a natural sympathy for anti-British rebels, were so violently pro-Arab that they were even willing to jeopardize their own political careers in resisting London's demand for a 'strong hand.' Sir Michael Macdonnell, Chief Justice, who in 1929 had scornfully referred to the people of Tel Aviv as international proletariat, openly denounced Government policy in 1936. When he left Palestine in 1936 a nationalist Arab delegation crowded the platform to bid him farewell.

At least one other senior official let himself be guided openly by his pronounced pro-Arab views until he was

transferred to another service—but only after he had been in virtual opposition to Government for three months.

The attitude of these British officials in putting class, imperialist, and fascist ideals before any others was on a par with the stand of those British Tories who supported Mussolini and even Hitler when British interests were openly menaced.

Nor was the policy of the 'strong hand' easy, because for a few panicky months in 1936 the British seemed entirely unprepared to meet the crisis. The British army, organized in nineteenth century style, had been allowed to become woefully old-fashioned. The haughty officers, the undersized, vacant-faced young soldiers of the few battalions hastily sent to Palestine created a strange impression in the country. So low was army establishment that reservists had to be called up, and even one Guards regiment sent to Palestine.

And so it is no wonder that the British Home Government, discovering suddenly that it possessed only dangerously inadequate armed forces, finding itself attacked from every side by conflicting political claims, forced to overcome the deadweight of an entrenched, inefficient bureaucracy, tried at all costs to play for time, and, without having to take a decisive step, to narrow and localize the conflict.

This is one side of the British case. But against that, the British Government has been accused by the Zionists, and even by some Arabs, of deliberately prolonging the conflict even when the situation was in hand. How far is this true? Partly. The British had not instigated the disturbances; but one can only assume that, once they had arisen, the opportunity of bringing a small army to Palestine and enabling the military forces to acquire a thorough familiarity with the country in prolonged manoeuvres was not unwelcome, and was exploited to the full. For all its apparent weakness and local eccentricities British policy during the last two years has followed a definite pattern. 'Non-intervention,' whether in Palestine in 1936 or in Spain, is a high-minded cloak for a cold, deliberate, and self-

interested policy of the British ruling class in a declining capitalist world, step by step revealing itself more clearly during the last years.

The necessity for keeping troops ready in the Middle East during the summer of 1936 may therefore have been always a motive of British policy. But otherwise the Palestine issue was confusing ; and divisions within British policy were clearly shown by the odd course of the disturbances.

After the first outbreak in Jaffa in April, the next days were relatively quiet, and the group of Arab political extremists around the Mufti who had immediately appointed themselves the Arab Higher Committee and proclaimed a nation-wide general strike, had time to look round.

What now ? To their surprise, however, they found themselves met with almost effusive tolerance by British authorities who seemed ready for conciliation at any price. The Mufti's British supporters in Palestine already promised him success. Through sad experience the Mufti knew that the pro-Arab attitude of Jerusalem was not that of London. But, given this initial encouragement, the Arab strike spread swiftly. Terrorism helped, and within a short while most Arab shops, factories, building works, and transport, including the Jaffa port, had been brought to a standstill.

It was by no means a complete strike. The great majority of the Arabs, the fellaheen, continued working in the fields. All Arab Government employees, from judges to clerks, railwaymen and policemen, went on working. Haifa Harbour, where Christian Arabs and Jews predominated, remained open throughout the strike and indeed approached record figures. But behind this structure, in purely Arab enterprise, the strike was carried on in a somewhat Arab and fantastic manner. Jaffa port, purely Arab, was closed ; its sturdy stevedores and boatmen, carrying on a thousand-year-old tradition in their work, were urged on by patriotic agitators to strike yet another week, and yet another, and

victory would be theirs. 'Tel Aviv was starving, it could not exist without Jaffa.' This at a time when, across the narrow frontier in Tel Aviv, visitors and foreign tourists were flocking into the exhibition building and gay concert halls of the Levant Fair, and when, at the other end of Tel Aviv, Zionist engineers and workers were already constructing the new Tel Aviv Lighter Port, which would end Jaffa's historical monopoly.

But behind this fantastic attitude there was the grim reality of a real struggle. By the middle of May, encouraged by four weeks' 'tolerated' strike and disorder, the Arabs went further. Sporadic disorder suddenly became systematic; the immediate stoppage of Jewish immigration became a side issue; the Arab leadership, launching a propaganda campaign in the neighbouring Arab countries, went full out in demanding a national independent Arab Palestine.

Few obstacles seemed to be placed in their way. As the *Peel Report* states (p. 278):

'At an early stage in its course the Mufti and the Members of the Committee were allowed to make a tour throughout Palestine. We were informed that one district had been fairly quiet until the Mufti was given this permission and held conferences at which neither police nor officials were allowed to be present. From the date of the tour the strike had spread and stiffened.'

Though military reinforcements were now gradually brought into Palestine, no action was taken against the Arab leadership. The troops were used only as police, taking no initiative, firing only in self-defence or when peaceful citizens were fired upon. This leniency against Arab rebellion caused Zionist consternation. It could only be interpreted, so it seemed, as a fundamental change in British policy towards Palestine, yet suddenly there was a complete *volte-face*. At the end of May the High Commissioner permitted Tel Aviv to construct its own Lighter Port, gaining its independence from Arab Jaffa. In addition 4,500 Jewish labour immigration certificates, or double

the previous number, were granted for the current half-year.

This apparent lack of success only enflamed the Arab leaders, who once they had gambled by launching the strike could no longer withdraw. Arab public opinion could now be swung round to the extremist side, passionate national resentment spread through the population, the intense sympathy of outside forces, Arab and otherwise, became involved, and during the hot Palestine summer months of June and July the Arab strike grew into a proper Arab rebellion. Systematic shooting, destruction, and terrorism went on throughout the country. Trees were uprooted, road traffic ambushed, mines laid on the railway; numbers of night attacks were made on Jewish settlements, with little result; all over the country considerable numbers of Jews were ambushed and shot.

In the meantime in Jerusalem and London the political comedy went on. At the end of June the Arab senior officials—the pride of the British Palestine Administration—issued a warning memorandum to the British that their sympathy was entirely with the rebellion, with the ‘heroes of the hills’, and that they supported the Arab demand for self-government. A week later the junior Arab Civil Servants followed suit.

Were the British authorities terrified that a complete walk-out of all the Arab officials and police might reveal the weakness of the Palestine Government, or that in Arab eyes Britain would be identified with the Jews? Again, the British reaction was one of leniency and defensive action by the armed forces and frantic efforts by the High Commissioner not to grant the Arab leaders their extreme demands but to negotiate a compromise.

But, at the end of June, the Palestine Government was forced to issue Emergency Regulations to cope with the situation. A split in its own ranks immediately became evident: the Judicature, that is, the Chief Justice, Macdonnell, immediately sabotaged the act by declaring the Regulations *ultra vires* and severely censuring the

Government. The situation was paradoxical. As one of the disgusted British military officers, responsible for keeping order, wrote afterwards :

‘ It was not until the 12th of June that the civil power issued emergency regulations. In these regulations it ordered increased penalties for the illegal use of arms against the forces of order, for the illegal possession of arms, for acts done against public order, such as intimidation, and for acts calculated to assist those opposed to public order, such as signalling a warning approach of troops to an armed band. At the same time, it took power to impose restrictions on individuals, inflict collective punishments, control communications and the Press, restrict movement, take over or destroy property, and intern individuals without trial. At once these regulations were challenged in the courts, and a ridiculous situation developed in which the executive government and judicature engaged in battle. In fact, a body of officials said that it had no right to say “ No ” to things which the executive government said it must do, if it was to maintain public order and go on governing.’<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime the Arab Press, in shrill defiance, tried to incite the bewildered masses with stories such as that the British in their brutal efforts to quell the rebellion were dropping poisoned sweets from aeroplanes on Arab villages.

The unhappy Palestine Government tried other steps, exiling the leading agitators. But because these exiles were left at liberty, every place of exile immediately became a new centre of Arab agitation. As a result the Government instituted a concentration camp, first near the Egyptian border and later removed to the military headquarters at Sarafend, where some extremist leaders were interned under very easy conditions, permitted to have spacious quarters, receive visitors, have their own books, radio, etc.

In the House of Commons Gallacher, the Communist Member, added comic relief by claiming that conditions in the camp were worse than in Siberia.

At the end of July the mystery of British policy was partly solved when the Government announced that, in

<sup>1</sup> Simson, *Rule and Rebellion in Palestine*, p. 210.

view of the misunderstanding on all sides, a Royal Commission of Enquiry would be sent out in order to investigate, not the immediate causes of the outbreak, but the entire situation. The statement partly explained British leniency towards the rebellion, because it implied that the rebellion might have been based on grievances which were justified. This announcement, with its inevitable implications of a change in the mandatory *status quo*, was received gloomily by the Jews, who knew—rightly—that they could only lose by this change. The gloom deepened when the personnel of the Commission, consisting of Imperial and Indian administrators under the Chairmanship of Lord Peel, former head of the India Office, was announced. The Mediterranean situation had obviously decided the British Government to change the status of Palestine.

But the announcement did not satisfy the Arabs. Their suspicion of Royal Commissions and Parliament as dominated by Jewish influence was probably deep-rooted. In August there was a sudden pause. Partly only a lull in newspaper attention because the Spanish Civil War had broken out.

Early in August, to the surprise and dismay of the Jews, the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Nuri Pasha es Said (once Lawrence's 'smart young Mesopotamian staff officer,' now become an elderly commonplace Arab politician amidst the unending intrigues of Baghdad), arrived in Jerusalem as 'friendly mediator' between the Palestine Arabs and the British, and stayed at Government House as the High Commissioner's guest. This was taken as a sign that the British Government was ready to yield to Arab demands, and only seeking a suitable procedure.

Only a week later, however, Arab hopes, which had been already almost triumphant, were shattered when the British Government in London announced that Jewish immigration would not be stopped under threats, that Nuri Pasha had no official standing to give any assurances, and that on the contrary another whole division of troops would be sent to Palestine to put down disorder and establish peace.

This setback resulted in yet another wave of terrorism. A new turn was given to the situation at the beginning of September, when it became known that large semi-military bands had taken up positions in the rocky hill triangle of Nablus, Jenin, and Tulkarm, led officially by Fauzi Bey Kawkaji, former Turkish officer and exiled guerilla leader of the 1925 Syrian revolt. These Arab rebels, the majority not Palestinian Arabs, were, as information afterwards showed, armed forces prepared originally for rebellion in Syria rather than Palestine, which accounted for their late appearance. They were never very numerous, probably never more than a thousand strong, but given strength by the passive support of the whole Arab country and the young Palestinian Arabs who joined their ranks.

For the next six or eight weeks, those hot, weary Palestine summer weeks before the rain, the British troops were engaged by the Arab bands up and down the country. It was a weary affair. The British forces, consisting of two full divisions, air force, tank corps, the Palestine police, and Jewish auxiliaries, formed a small army which filled Palestine and created critical problems of accommodation. But, quite grotesquely, they remained almost inactive. Martial law was not declared, and the whole army force was only on the defensive. The military units were given no plan of action, and were left quite in the dark as to immediate or ultimate objective. They were merely told to patrol or occupy barracks or hurried from place to place to defeat Arab attacks wherever they broke out.

How could a mobile and unseen enemy be engaged on such terms? In a torn hill country like Palestine this must have been impossible. Luckily the British were aided by the new-styled Arab 'leader,' Fauzi Bey Kawkaji. This Arab rebel against the British army of 1936 has been compared to Lawrence. No comparison could be more misleading. Kawkaji was inefficiency itself, probably only a handicap. One strategic consideration can make this clear. The most vulnerable point of Palestine was its lack of communications. Thanks to its Government, Palestine in 1936 was



still without direct road communications between Tel Aviv, its main city, and Haifa, its main port. The coastal road of sixty miles had been deliberately left unbuilt by the Government, partly to safeguard an inefficient Government railway, partly to prevent too much Jewish settlement of the coastal plain.

Consequently all road traffic in 1936 between Haifa and either Jerusalem or Tel Aviv-Jaffa had to move slowly along a winding road of a hundred and ten miles, passing through the central hill country of Nablus and Jenin north to Nazareth before turning back to Haifa. Owing to the dangerous character of this mountain route, with its lonely valleys and opportunities for ambush, road traffic had from the beginning of the disturbances travelled in daily-escorted convoys, which naturally moved only at the speed of their slowest member. Here, therefore, was a Government which deliberately denied itself its best communications—a heaven-sent opportunity for an Arab Lawrence! Yet so inefficient was Kawkaji that his presence was an obvious handicap. On September 24 the escort of the convoy encountered a large Arab band; reinforcements had time to arrive and to engage the Arabs on the ground until aircraft located them and inflicted at least twenty casualties upon them before they fled. Five days later, on September 29, an identical attempt was made by a band to attack a convoy on the main road, with the same result of final slaughter from two or three aeroplanes. And so it went on. Kawkaji was apparently incapable of realizing that his large concentrated bands of one hundred men with rifles were obviously fatally vulnerable from the air.

In the words of the British military observer :

‘That was all that happened. Fauzi, with his foreign invaders and all the Palestinian bands co-operating with him, did next to nothing but suffer casualties. Whenever he tried to come where he was not welcome the initiative was taken out of his hands, and he and his men were hunted and hurried till darkness saved them. The long vulnerable columns of motor transport passed through his strongholds to their destinations without a hitch, except when one turned back to Haifa

for repairs. Yet, when the rebellion ended, the Arabs made a national hero of this somewhat ineffectual Fauzi and took to selling postcard photographs of him throughout the country for relatively large sums, the excess profits going to the fund for "distressed Palestine."<sup>1</sup>

The war remained a weary record of military engagements between British troops and aeroplanes against Arab bands, in which the latter were badly beaten yet managed to fight and receive sufficient reinforcements to drag the resistance on. Yet as little as the Jews did the Arabs relax. Their desperation only mounted with these losses, and the whole country (and this was much more important) was given over to constant endless murder of Jews, British, and even Arabs from ambush, to terrorism, sabotage, and destruction, which the Civil Government was apparently powerless to suppress and through which both the Jewish and Arab parts of the country were sinking into poverty and depression.

In October it became clear to the Arab leaders that in spite of apparent British leniency—most of the known leaders of the rebellion were still free—further fighting against such overwhelming odds would soon exhaust their entire strength and no further concessions by force could be obtained. The gamble for an independent Arab state had failed. Yet, obviously, a sufficient impression had been made on British opinion. The Mandate, and unlimited Jewish immigration, could no longer be maintained. A no less urgent reason for stopping the strike was the beginning of the citrus export season, in which the Arabs were almost as interested as the Jews. It was clear that many Arabs would be unable to resist the prospect of an excellent orange season made probable by the civil war in Spain, the chief rival producer. The strike would therefore have to be ended. Only an excuse was required and it was not far to seek. The Mufti had succeeded in arousing the Arabs of all countries in the cause of the Palestine rebellion. To a certain extent his efforts had not even run counter to

<sup>1</sup> Simson, *Rule and Rebellion in Palestine*, p. 231.

parallel British efforts to strengthen an Arab block of pro-British alignment. The Palestine Government, still all out for conciliation, was preserving the fiction of the separate standing of the Mufti and the Arab Higher Committee and the rebel bands in the hills. On October 11, therefore, probably through the direct intervention of the Palestine Government, the Mufti was permitted to publish the following appeal from the three Arab kings of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Yemen :

‘ Through the President of the Arab Higher Committee to our sons the Arabs of Palestine.

‘ We have been deeply pained by the present state of affairs in Palestine. For this reason we have agreed with our brothers the Kings and the Emir to call upon you to resolve for peace in order to save further shedding of blood.

‘ In doing this, we rely on the good intentions of our friend Great Britain, who has declared that she will do justice. You must be confident that we will continue our efforts to assist you.’

That there was strong opposition to this move from other British circles is shown by a leading article in *The Times* describing this appeal as one which might have ‘ *saved the face of Sir Arthur Wauchope and the Mufti*,’ but set a deplorable precedent in acknowledging outside Arab rights to interfere in Palestine.

The same day the Arab Higher Committee called off the strike. Contrary to the expectations of those who believed the Higher Committee to have lost control over its armed extremists, acts of violence at once ceased almost entirely. Two days later the British Government announced that the country was at peace and that curfew orders and convoys would be discontinued.

A certain measure of peace descended upon the exhausted country and the weary antagonists.

Both the Jewish and Arab leaders claimed victory—the Arabs, because they had maintained their partial strike and carried on for six months against overwhelming odds, because the heroic sacrifice of ‘rebels of the hills’, who had

attacked British tanks and machine guns with rifles, had made an undoubted impression in London and created a new Palestinian nationalism ; the Jews, because large-scale terrorism had not broken the Zionist spirit, not one Zionist settlement had been abandoned, the Jewish economy had emerged strong and unshaken, business had been carried on as usual, and it was clear that their Palestine position was already too strong to be assailed in direct attack.

Even the Palestine Government might claim credit because the proclamation of martial law had not been needed.

Unfortunately, there remained the problem of the bands in the hills. Kawkaji, far from disbanding his followers, held court and issued threatening ultimatums to renew the fight unless the British Government avoided provocation.

As an anticlimax this was too much. After two weeks the Palestine Government was forced to call back the troops. This time the angry military commanders took matters into their own hands. Plans were kept secret, even from the Palestine police. A very commonplace but methodical enveloping movement against the bands was launched with a fair number of troops, and within three days Kawkaji and his men were completely surrounded and as good as arrested.

As an innovation in Palestine politics this was startling and dramatic. The entire Arab Press spoke of betrayal, and the indignant leaders threatened a renewal of disturbances. Again the Palestine Administration grew frightened. The Royal Commission was just about to sail from England. Orders were at once given to the troops to cease operations.

By the next morning word of these developments had mysteriously gone round the country ; on this day some thousands of Arab villagers and townsmen, coming on foot or by car or even in organized bus tours from Jerusalem and Jaffa, met Kawkaji at his refuge and escorted him for some miles to the Palestine frontier where a smaller assembly of Transjordanians waited to give him a similar

welcome. Accompanied by some hundreds of his supporters, Kawkaji crossed the Jordan, and in the end went to Baghdad, where he boasted noisily in the cafés about his victorious stand against the British, until the Iraq Government tired of him and banished him to Kirkuk, there to cool his heels.

After six months of riot and bloodshed it was all over. The Arabs had not succeeded in destroying the Zionist settlements, their rebellion in their own hill districts had been finally overcome. But they had shown that Zionist colonization and orderly Government were impossible against their resistance. The Royal Commission under Lord Peel was now free to come to Palestine.

## CHAPTER XVI

### PEEL COMMISSION: PAX BRITANNICA

**I**N the history of British imperialism during its critical phase of 1935-38 the Report of the Peel Commission is a telling social document.

The Report was written in the early part of 1937 when Britain's position in the Mediterranean, which at one time had seemed wholly in the balance, had become perhaps not less critical but at least more clearly defined.

In Abyssinia Mussolini was firmly established. Before Madrid the fascist forces had suffered a bad defeat. Fascist aggression was steadily advancing, but was not invincible.

It was at this stage that the *Peel Report* was written. And its characteristic was that its six authors, mainly British colonial administrators sent with prepared instructions,<sup>1</sup> were yet moved sufficiently by what they saw in Palestine, particularly the achievements of the Jewish National Home and the genuine idealist fervour of Arab nationalism, to prepare a fair-minded and progressive report, very different from the spirit prevailing in London.

The Commission was headed by Lord Peel (The Rt. Hon. Earl Peel, G.C.S.I., G.B.E.), an experienced colonial and Indian administrator of the old Conservative school, nearly seventy and suffering from a fatal illness, a man of

<sup>1</sup> There is one striking illustration of this. In its appendix the *Peel Report* contains a number of maps showing the administrative districts of Palestine Government and Jewish-owned land, afforestation and irrigation, etc. All these maps were prepared by the Survey of Palestine, Jaffa, 1937. But there is also one other map of Palestine on which the proposed frontiers of the Jewish and Arab States are drawn in a broad red line, and this map bears the significant words, in small letters, *London War Office*.

sympathetic personality, sufficiently broad-minded to be shocked at the petty, unintelligent misgovernment he discovered in Palestine.

Four of his colleagues were similar colonial experts. The sixth, Professor Coupland, Beit Professor of Colonial History at Oxford University, was a considerably younger man, and author of several volumes on imperial problems written from an intellectual point of view. His inclusion suggested that the Palestine problem might also be considered from the standpoint of that new imperialist thought which, banishing the old brutal mercantile past, tried to see in the Empire an alliance against the far worse aggressors outside. How far can such an idealist interpretation of British imperialism be adequate in the modern world? The *Peel Report*, written with considerable talent, did not answer this question; but at least it left it open.

In Palestine these Commissioners tackled an issue whose partisans were as confused as confusing. The harsh lime-light of Jerusalem seemed immediately turned on. The sittings of the Commission began with a few firework dramatics and a touch of farce. A new Jewish Labour Schedule was due. Should immigration certificates be granted while the immigration question was still *sub judice*? In 1929 Jewish immigration had been suspended during the sittings of the Shaw Commission. To the Arabs this had become tradition; whatever the outcome of Royal Commissions, during their sittings Palestine must be hermetically closed to Jewish immigrants. On this occasion the British Government, as compromise, gave only 1,800 certificates for the half-year, as against 4,500 in the previous period. The Zionists protested vehemently and automatically, but accepted the schedule. The Arab leadership, however, claimed that the granting of the certificates was prejudging the whole issue, and proclaimed an official boycott of the Royal Commission; a tactical mistake, only withdrawn at the last moment, after some anxious hours for the friends of the Arabs in the Palestine Administration, when the annoyed Commissioners were already thinking

of packing their trunks. Had the Jews possessed the political acumen to limit their evidence to four or five days the Mufti would undoubtedly have been caught out and the Commission have sailed without hearing the Arab case. But there was no chance of this. The Zionist evidence was exhaustively prepared and occupied two full weeks.

From the beginning an air of unreality was maintained before the Commission. Appeals were made by both sides to abstract principles, British justice, fair play ; both sides gave assurances of their loyalty ; yet both Jews and Arabs knew that the League of Nations period of self-determination, democracy and the rest was over, that only British imperial interests would determine the verdict.

The opening evidence, delivered by Palestine British officials before a surprisingly impartial tribunal, this time revealed gross inefficiency and inadequacy in the administration of the country.

The Zionist evidence, following, began with a moving appeal to the Commissioners by Chaim Weizman, who described the plight of six million Jews in Central and Eastern Europe, Zionist achievements in Palestine, which held out hopes of saving one in five, one in ten, one in twenty of the young European Jews, Zionist readiness to come to peaceful agreement with the Arabs and Jewish loyalty to British interests.

The rest of the Jewish evidence was a long-winded, repetitive, and wearisome series of speeches, covering every conceivable Jewish achievement and Jewish grievance, all supporting the argument that, had the Palestine Government not obstructed Zionist effort and permitted Arab extremists to terrorize the country, the provisions of the Mandate could have been carried out without the hostility of the peaceful Arab majority.

Again the old half-truth which, considering the wide spread of Arab nationalism, was no longer a very credible illusion. Lord Peel's sudden excursions out of his sleepy boredom—nailing the Zionists down to clear definitions of aim and fact in Palestine, something they had always



tried to avoid—showed in which direction British policy was moving and that the former period of Arab peacefulness and theoretically unlimited Zionist immigration was ended, perhaps never to return.

The Arab evidence was parallel. If the Zionist case had been characteristically over-profuse, evading issues, the Arab evidence was true to type in its uncompromising, extremist character. Only the Mufti and members of his party gave evidence. Any Arabs seeking compromise had been frightened by threat of assassination. The Arabs wanted power. Their evidence was addressed to their own audience more than to the Commission. This time the ideology of Dr. Goebbels had been joined to traditional Oriental argument. Gross exaggerations, blatant falsehoods, ludicrous economic non-sequiturs, were calmly put forward.<sup>1</sup> Jamal Husseini, a wealthy gentleman farmer, member of perhaps the largest landowning and rent-sucking family in Palestine, spoke in the interests of the fellaheen. Auni Abdul Hadi, when challenged, turned two thousand Arab money-lenders in Palestine into Jews. The Mufti declared that the Jews wished to destroy the Arab holy places, which were not safe under British rule because Britain herself was under the Jews. It was rather too blatant a statement, too impertinent an attack on British prestige. Similarly, the Mufti was too extreme, to say the least, when insisting that the number of Jews in Palestine must be reduced to the pre-War total. As the *Peel Report* said, the following question put to the Mufti and his replies should be noted :

*Question :* ' Does His Eminence think this country can assimilate the 400,000 Jews already in the country ? '

*Answer :* ' No. '

*Question :* ' Some of them would have to be removed by a process kindly or painful, as the case may be. '

*Answer :* ' We must leave all this to the future. '

<sup>1</sup> Fuad Saba, the economic expert of the Arab Higher Committee, in a list of twenty articles designed to show how persistently Government tariffs taxed the fellaheen for the benefit of Jewish industrialists, included as two of the items—sanitary belts and manhole covers.

The Mufti's friends hastily tried to explain that he had only made an Eastern bargaining point, starting with 80,000 Jews in order to agree finally on no more than the present number, 400,000. But this bargaining was a bad miscalculation. Through his personal appearance, showing him as the man he was, most of the reputation of religious idealism built up around him was destroyed. From this day pressure against him grew steadily in British political circles.

After the evidence the Commission could consider Palestine and its problems.

From the four hundred pages of the *Report* the impression can be gained that what struck the Commission most was to find the Jewish National Home a reality. Considered theoretically from abroad, the Jewish position in Palestine might have seemed precarious and improbable; yet here it was a living fact, here were 400,000 people, here were towns, factories, villages and fields, businesses and transport, all firmly established and forming an amazingly stable, successful, alive, and enterprising Jewish sector of Palestine. The Jews had expended vast sums—this impressed the Commissioners very much: sixty-three million pounds by private capital and fourteen million pounds by Jewish institutions, the latter largely *à fond perdu*.

'The most singular feature in the economy of Palestine is the vast amount of capital which has been invested in the country *for which no remittances abroad for interest and sinking fund are required*. This feature *sharply differentiates* the Jewish National Home from other communities which have been created by a process of colonization and are burdened by charges on the capital obtained from overseas for their development. . . . It may be argued that even a check to immigration or the reduction of the number of new-comers with capital or a slackening of interest in the Zionist Movement might only cause some readjustment in the economic equilibrium, and probably call out for capital investment some of the large deposits in the Palestine banks' (p. 212).

In fact, from every point of view, Jewish national life in Palestine was surprisingly developed. 'The only cultural difference between this young community and its elders in

Europe or America was a difference of intensity,' mainly because a quite unusual proportion of the immigrant community were young and highly educated, and most of them strongly conscious of a national mission. Jewish settlement seemed permanent. 'The dominant feeling is an overwhelming sense of escape. The champions of Zionism have always held that a Jew released from anti-Jewish environments and restored to Palestine would not only feel free as he never felt before but would also acquire a new self-confidence, a new zest in living from his consciousness that he was engaged in a great constructive task—and on the whole they are now proved right.'

This first impression of the Peel Commission contains some exaggerations. They were surprised by the amazing reality of the Jewish National Home. As men of the world, they probably tended to a certain bias in favour of the Jews—contrary to the anti-Jewish petty officials. But they had sufficient imagination to recognize the elements of real greatness and improbable courage of the Zionist effort.

'It is impossible, we believe, for any unprejudiced observer to see the National Home and not to wish it well. It has meant so much for the relief of unmerited suffering. It displays so much energy and enterprise and devotion to a common cause. In so far as Britain has helped towards its creation we would claim with Lord Balfour that to that extent, at any rate, Christendom has shown itself not oblivious of all the wrong it has done' (p. 124).

So much for the National Home, Christendom, Lord Balfour, and the Zionist case. If only it were not for the Arabs, their equal case, their equal national passion and aspirations!

The Peel Commission hinted, if it did not admit, that the inefficiency and inertness of the cumbersome Palestine Government had done its share to intensify the Arab anti-Jewish movement, and, through twenty years of unenlightened government in which no effort to 'denationalize' the country had been made, to give it a reactionary and chauvinist form.

But this was only a minor factor, like the undoubted financial and other aid given to Arab nationalists by Italian and German agents ; all this might have helped, but had not created the real and fervent Arab nationalist movement which, if one took a long view, could be as little permanently crushed in Palestine as anywhere else.

Without doubt, on the balance, Zionist investments, colonization and immigration had considerably benefited the greater part of the Arabs. The Arab arguments of their 'impoverishment' by Zionist invaders were so much nonsense. But their political grievance was as real as it could be. The Mufti's public evidence might be a chain of distortions and untruths, but behind him stood a united movement of Arab leaders and middle class and many thousands of Arab youth, filled with fear of Jewish domination and a determined demand for national rights and self-government, which could no longer be disregarded without immediately producing a new explosion. (That Arab municipal self-government had under these conditions remained stagnant and corrupt was no counter-argument, because Arab political ambitions had been entirely concentrated on the larger issue.)

And the Zionists themselves, through their blind spot regarding Arab feelings, had done their best to create this unbroken Arab front. Not only was Arab national feeling as deep-rooted as Zionism, but likewise part of a greater movement. Railways, motor and aeroplane communications, the Commission insisted, even with over-emphasis, were creating a new unity among the scattered Arab peoples. Outside Arab sympathy for the Palestine rebels had been much more marked in 1935 than ever before. Volunteers had come from Syria and Iraq, financial and moral support from every corner of the Arab world. Should no Arab demands in Palestine be granted, it was certain that strong anti-Zionist and anti-British sentiment would develop throughout the Arab East.

So what was to be done ?

Palliatives seemed of little value. Throughout the

investigations the Commission had been struck by the intellectual and political isolation of the two Palestine communities. The isolation had started from the Jewish side ; the whole philosophy of Zionism was that the Jews should live in Palestine as though the country were theirs by right to settle in, and empty, or at least half empty. The growth and spread of the National Home with cities and villages had not diminished its isolation ; on the contrary, increase in wealth, numbers, economic and social possibilities, had helped the Zionists to reach an astonishing degree of autarchy, to ignore their Arab neighbours even in mixed cities like Haifa and Jerusalem, and to prolong the illusion of an empty country and the simple Zionist equation : Diaspora persecution—Palestine upbuilding. In fact, for twenty years this illusion had been zealously fostered in the minds of the Jewish population. It was a passionate complaint of the Zionists that the whole Arab education in Palestine, which the Government had failed to control, had become one vast system of national anti-Jewish incitement of the Arab youth. But for all its ' peaceful, progressive and constructive ' character the Jewish educational system performed exactly the same function :

' From the age of three or four years, when Jewish children enter the kindergarten to be taught Hebrew, if they do not know it already, pride in the past of Jewry and in the National Home as an exclusively and intensely Jewish achievement of the present is the dynamic centre-point of their whole intellectual development. The idea that they are to share their life in any way with the Arabs, that they are growing up to be fellow-citizens with the Arabs in a common Palestinian State, is only recognized in the teaching of a little Arabic in the secondary schools. So far, in fact, from facilitating a better understanding between the races, the Jewish educational system is making the latter more and more difficult as year by year its production of eager Jewish nationalists mounts up ' (p. 335).

Difficulties of even elementary contact were increased by the fundamental difference between, roughly, the

modern Western outlook of the Jews and the Oriental level of the Arabs, particularly the illiteracy and poverty of the peasant majority, which in the eyes of the Commission, ignorant of Soviet achievement, could hardly be changed.

‘Whether in relieving the Arab peasant of his indebtedness by co-operative societies and agricultural banks or in persuading him to irrigate his lands or to plant fruit trees, several decades must pass before any marked change will be apparent’ (p. 271).

The situation of Palestine therefore showed the strange phenomenon of two different communities living in one country, even frequently meeting each other, in contact in business and administration, yet socially unaware of each other’s existence, each pursuing a political line which the mere presence of the other community made impossible.

The Jews demanded free Zionist immigration, the Arabs, as majority, self-government in order to end Zionism.

‘We are confronted, therefore, with a paradoxical situation. The Arabs of Palestine, it has been admitted, are as fit to govern themselves as the Arabs of Iraq or Syria. The Jews of Palestine, it is clear, are as fit to govern themselves as any educated community in Europe or elsewhere. Yet, associated as they are under the Mandate, self-government is impracticable for both people’ (p. 362).

So what was to be done? The international situation was pressing. Palliatives—fundamental agricultural reform, limited self-government, planned instead of unplanned colonization—were rejected by the Commission, with a hint to the Jews that there was no time:

‘Like everyone else, the Jews must realize that another world war is unhappily not impossible: and in the changes and chances of war it is easy to imagine circumstances under which the Jews might have to rely on their own resources for the defence of the National Home. There, then, is a second and very potent reason for haste’ (p. 124).

What, therefore, was the solution in the minds of the Commissioners? The simplest, and one traditionally

British, and one which could at once be executed : To divide Palestine. There was to be one predominantly Jewish State and one predominantly Arab State ; and because, after all, Britain had vital strategic interests in Palestine, there would in addition be a British Mandated State containing Jerusalem, the Holy City, with a corridor leading to the sea.

Only—the trouble was that there was so little to divide. The total cultivable area of Palestine, optimistically reckoned, was not over 4,000 square miles ; its three large urban areas, Haifa, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv—Jaffa, containing 450,000 people or one-third of the population, were entirely mixed, 60 per cent Jewish and 40 per cent Arab. The citrus area along the coastal plain was a patchwork of Jewish and Arab plantations. So what was there left for state-making except the bare stretches of hill country ?

Theoretically there might have been one solution. As a country Palestine was a fiction ; had it been joined with Syria, a Jewish portion might have been carved out of the greater ‘ Levant Federation,’ without arousing Arab fears of Jewish domination, one of the strongest motives for the Arab rising. But this would have involved changes in the British and French spheres of influence, and as such was out of the question. The Commission therefore had to draw frontiers within the narrow limits of Palestine. Zionist colonization had taken place along fairly continuous geographical areas, which could be roughly followed and enlarged. The Jewish State, as seen by the Commissioners, therefore included all of Galilee and most of the densely settled coastal plain from Haifa in the north to the Gaza area in the south, with a corridor at Jaffa.

Most of the rest of Palestine, that is the relatively large hill country of Nablus and Jenin in the north and Hebron and Beersheba in the south, together with the Negeb, the semi-desert southern portion inhabited only by Beduin, could be combined with Transjordan into an Arab State. Because this Arab State, shut off from the sea, would be extremely poor, the British Exchequer would be asked

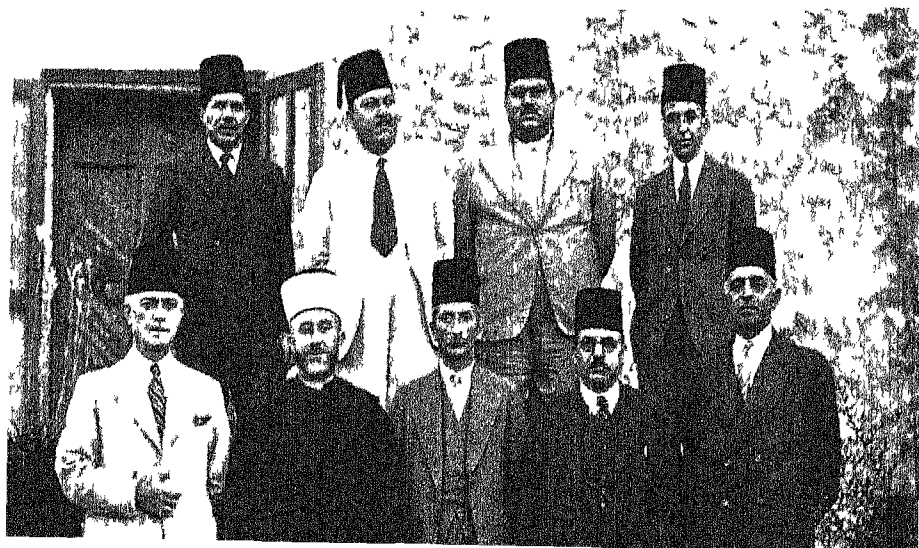


*Above Burying the Mandate? The Peel Commission*

PLATL IV

*Below The Arab Higher Committee (The Grand Mufti, second from left in bottom row Yakoub ben Glussein, Leader of Youth Movement, second from right in top row)*

[Facing page 74]







to vote £2,000,000 for its establishment ; and, in addition, it would derive revenue from two important Jewish enterprises within its borders, the Jordan Power Works and the Palestine Potash Works at the Dead Sea.

British strategic interests were equally safeguarded. During 1936 and 1937 Jerusalem had—thanks to the riots—gradually and unnoticed become a considerable British garrison town, and the obvious future administrative centre of the Middle East. For military reasons the area around Jerusalem and Bethlehem was therefore maintained as British Mandate, and linked with the sea at Jaffa by a corridor including Lydda aerodrome, the largest in the Middle East. Justification for this move was found in the guardianship of the Holy Places :

‘ We regard the protection of the Holy Places as a permanent trust, unique in its character and purpose, and not contemplated by Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

‘ In order to avoid misunderstanding, it might be frankly stated that this trust will only terminate if and when the League of Nations and the United States desire it to be so, and that, while it would be the trustee’s duty to promote the well-being and development of the local population concerned, *it is not intended* that in the course of time they should stand by themselves as a wholly self-governing community ’ (p. 382).

The Jewish and Arab States, it was intended, should finally become two completely ‘ independent and sovereign States,’ with full internal authority over their immigration, military, finance, and tariff policies, bound to each other and to Great Britain by special treaty.

The Jewish State would contain four ‘ mixed ’ towns, Haifa, Tiberias, Safed, and Acre, which, to ease the transfer, would for a transition period remain under British administration. Because the Arab State would lose taxation rights over two large Arab communities, those of Haifa and Jerusalem, it would be compensated by an annual subvention by the Jewish State.

This division seemed to the Commission a just one.

True, an Arab minority of nearly 300,000 would come under the Jewish State ; but, if Zionist colonization continued, the Jewish State would soon be sufficiently Jewish. The greatest problem was that of Galilee and the northern frontier, where a solidly Arab hill country of 80,000 inhabitants was surrounded on three sides by narrow Zionist colonization zones, and on the fourth by the Syrian frontier.

How was Galilee to be divided ? According to population the centre of Arab mountain area would become an enclave surrounded on three sides by Jewish strips, cut off entirely from the rest of the Arab State.

The difficulty was of the imperialist kind. To the north, not separated from Galilee by any natural frontier, was Syria, under French influence. To join the central hill country of Galilee to the new Syrian States would have involved no geographical or national problems and meant a clean cut between Arabs and Jews. But it would have meant transferring a considerable strategical area from British to French control, and this was not possible. So there was only one solution : Central Galilee, though it had remained overwhelmingly Arab, would have to be part of the Jewish State. The Commission tried to cover up this difficulty :

‘ The proposed frontier necessitates the inclusion in the Jewish area of the Galilee Highlands between Safad and the Plain of Acre. It will be remembered that this is the part of Palestine in which the Jews have retained a footing almost, if not entirely, without a break from the beginning of the Diaspora to the present day, and that the sentiment of all Jewry is deeply attached to the holy cities of Safad and Tiberias. Until quite recently, moreover, the Jews in Galilee have lived on friendly terms with their Arab neighbours ; and throughout the series of disturbances the fellahs of Galilee have shown themselves less amenable to political incitement than those of Samaria and Judea, where the centres of Arab nationalism are located ’ (p. 384).

These are almost Zionist arguments. But still, numerous such administrative problems had been successfully dealt

with within the patchwork of the British Colonial Empire. To reduce the minority problem and provide scope for Jewish immigration to create a more solid Jewish State, the Commission proposed British co-operation and financial aid for a transfer of the Arab population from the Jewish to the Arab State, some of which was, 'in the last resort,' to be compulsory.

The Report embodying the Partition scheme was published at the end of July 1937, together—rather surprisingly—with a Government White Paper immediately accepting Partition in principle.

What can be said about the Peel scheme? That in spirit it really belongs to a period of British imperialism which was past, that it was too intellectual, too reasonable. It was conceived abstractedly, as though there were ample time for its execution, and not sufficiently in the light of the critical Mediterranean situation, with its threat of German and Italian dynamic expansion, and its disturbed native populations—hard facts impressing themselves inescapably upon the British Government, and making anything like the compulsory transfer of a large body of Arabs a very doubtful proposition.

Still, the Report represented the first step towards reform in the light of Palestine realities, as conceived by six of Britain's best imperial administrators. There was no question but that it favoured the Jews. Unlike the petty British officials on the spot, who were invariably pro-Arab, Lord Peel and his colleagues, high British politicians and men of the world, were extraordinarily impressed by the European aspect and scale of the Jewish achievement. Their genuine aim to give further scope for at least a number of years to the Zionist migration to Palestine is shown by the fact that they pledged British money on a considerable scale to establish the Arab State and transfer the minority. For all the miniature area of this proposed Jewish State—1,800 square miles, one-fifth of Palestine—it contained more than half the irrigable area, two-thirds or more of the citrus plantation, the fertile seaboard, with

its possibilities of dense cultivation, and Haifa, the deep-water port and already the greatest commercial centre of the Levant. To the Arabs little more than the undeveloped hill country remained (that the flourishing development of the Jewish area was due to Jewish effort was only half the argument—it was an area which could repay such effort) ; of their three large urban communities two were lost and the third, Jaffa, isolated as an enclave ; the autonomy and self-government they had gained for their State would be negated by their economic backwardness. How unfavourable they thought the Partition scheme is shown by the extent to which prominent Arab nationalists, even a man like Auni Abdul Hadi, the leader of the extreme Arab Independence Party, declared themselves ready (in private, of course) to negotiate a Jewish-Arab agreement granting the Jews a considerable annual immigration quota and avoiding the disaster of Partition.

For the Jewish people—had the Zionist leadership possessed political boldness—the *Peel Report* could have become as important as the Balfour Declaration. It could have been a step of further recognition of their position as a permanent factor in Palestine. As the Zionist leaders, Weizman, Ben-Gurion and the others knew, the economic position in Palestine was becoming dangerously precarious. For two years, in spite of all efforts, economic deterioration had been rapidly going on ; the 1936–7 citrus export season on which extravagant hopes had been placed because of the Spanish civil war had on the contrary proved a disastrous failure because the Valencia Government had dumped vast quantities of oranges at any price. And it was obvious that Jewish industries could never really become established under a mandatory regime depriving them of any protection. Partition, giving the Jews vital autonomy, would at last give them some firm ground under their feet ; they would for the first time be able to bargain for reciprocal tariffs for their citrus exports, would be able to conduct constructive finance, taxation and customs policies ; there would be good prospects of raising outside loans and even

conducting financial negotiations with responsible Arabs for Jewish colonization outside the borders of the State. True, in view of the large Arab minority to be dealt with and the transition period proposed by the British, the future bristled with difficulties ; yet certain immense advantages were so obvious that among the harassed Zionist administrators, Zionist optimism suddenly revived—and new justification was found.

Every political consideration should therefore have induced the Zionists to accept the Peel scheme at once, and with Jewish quickness make immediate practical proposals to facilitate its progress. Reality and realism would have been brought into Palestine politics. Both the limits of Zionism and its real prospects—relief for so many suffering Jews—would have been clearly demonstrated.

Instead, when these limits to Zionism were officially announced by the voice of the British Government, the greater part of the Zionist world, faced at the same time with the horrible dimensions of the Jewish tragedy, lost all touch with political realism. Among Jewish socialists as much as among out-and-out nationalists, reckless opposition flared up. To agree to the Peel proposals might mean facing Palestine realities, but was felt as betrayal of the spirit of Zionism and the entire hope of Jewry. And outside Palestine the shout of opposition was, if anything, fiercer. Here was the result of the messianic propaganda with which the Zionists had so long spurred on themselves and the Jewish people. For two years now they had tried desperately to disregard the grim realities of Palestine—the precarious economic situation, the critical position of the British in the Mediterranean precluding further commitments, the steady growth of violent hostility among the Arabs. Instead, they had pinned their faith to old catchwords—that Palestine was the Jews' by historic right, British policy pro-Jewish, Arab opposition a matter of a few criminal effendis ; that Palestine still held great prospects, and if Palestine were too small there were vast empty areas beyond its borders awaiting

Jewish expansion. How could the Zionists go back on their own beliefs by accepting a small limited area because there was no alternative ?

Storms of protest were raised against such decision. In fact, throughout the Diaspora the most exaggerated side of Zionism now showed itself. In London and Warsaw, New York and Johannesburg, ardent Zionists, together with countless Jews who were generally remote from Zionism, now raised a spontaneous outcry against any betrayal of Jewish rights by Weizman, Ben Gurion, and the other Zionist leaders : there must be no cowardliness, whether in Palestine or in world politics ; Jewish hopes in Palestine, suddenly hallowed again, must not be sold out merely because of Arab conspiracy and a few Arab bullets !

The vehemence of this opposition on the part of the Zionist masses confused the Zionist leaders, even though it was a natural result of their own past propaganda. The occasion demanded courage, but after two discouraging years, this was badly lacking. At hastily-convened meetings the Zionist leaders conferred. Lord Peel and Mr. Ormsby-Gore, the Colonial Secretary, expected swift acceptance of the new Partition plan, and decisive action by the Zionist leaders was required. But in the general confusion there was something in their own hearts which echoed to the protests, and they found it easy to decide, as a stratagem to save time for final acceptance, to join the majority.

Thereupon a strange political struggle, and for the Jews a tragic one, began. To the bewilderment of the British Government, which had expected strong Arab but not Zionist opposition, official protest meetings by all national Zionist Federations were announced. A full-dress Parliamentary debate was urged by British friends of the Zionists on the British Government. Attlee, Morrison, Wedgwood, and other British Labour leaders, supporting the Zionists, announced the opposition of the Labour Party to Partition, or at least any Partition not giving vastly greater scope to the Jews, as a betrayal of the Mandate and the Balfour Declaration. The full mistake of Zionist opposition became apparent

as the debate went on. Partition was equally opposed by the rich English Assimilationist Jews, who abhorred recognition of any Jewish State or Jewish nationality, and whose spokesman, the new Viscount Samuel, made a powerful, one-sided speech emphasizing the numerous weak points and problems of the scheme. From the Arab viewpoint Partition was opposed almost on the same terms by the Tory supporters of the Arabs, and finally, quite unexpectedly, Winston Churchill and other leading imperialists rose to explore the foolishness of granting 'sovereign independence' to two tiny states in Palestine without a basis of existence.

As on the Legislative Council issue, Government spokesmen seemed alone in supporting proposed reforms for Palestine, and after such surprising unanimous opposition, the Partition scheme would have seemed in danger, if not already killed, if this new Government of Chamberlain had not been more tenacious than any Government before it.

The Zionist leaders continued to act a part at the Zionist Congress at Zurich in August. The real position in Palestine was not revealed to the assembled Zionist delegates. One-third of the Congress rejected Partition outright; the other two-thirds, uneasily led by Weizman, rejected the Peel scheme, and only agreed that in principle the Jewish Executive might negotiate about a Jewish State, but a much larger one, virtually all Palestine.

After this the storm subsided; the Zionists seemed to wait. The British Government did nothing. Gradually it dawned on leaders and rank and file alike that in aligning themselves with anti-Zionist Jews and Arabs in defeating the Partition proposals, they had placed themselves in an impossible position.

Autumn 1937 was a bad time for the Palestine Jews. The Arabs went on shooting. Though the British authorities made considerable efforts to maintain order, though numerous Arabs were killed, caught or imprisoned, terrorism, now firmly rooted, went on. The orange export



season began very badly. By November and December Jewish unemployment had grown to at least 10,000, an enormous figure for such a small community. Immigration was reduced to a trickle, and then almost vanished. The British had little need to impose political restrictions—economic crisis following on the Jewish-Arab struggle had done it for them. As always, the Palestine Jews showed themselves at their best in this critical period. Bold and partly successful efforts were made by every Zionist institution, by all public bodies, to relieve unemployment. As a gesture the Histadrut initiated another labour turn-over fund. But these efforts could now only touch the fringe of the economic depression and disorder. For the first time a spirit of defeat and planless bewilderment spread amongst the Zionist ranks. The Jewish position seemed little better in Palestine than in Europe. There was nothing to do now but to hold out grimly, and wait, and this the Palestine Jews did. At the end of 1937 the Zionist leaders were glad to accept Partition even on less favourable terms than those of the Peel Commission, which they had so emotionally rejected in the summer.

And the Arabs? What of their national hopes?

Moderate Arabs, realizing also that Palestine had become a mixed country, had been against the uncompromising extremism of the Mufti's evidence. Now they saw it had obviously failed. The Mufti himself had not escaped severe censure, nor was his position any longer sure. But this was only a side issue. They were wholly dismayed by the result of their struggle. Lord Peel's Partition proposals had at once been accepted by the British Government. The friendship of high Palestine officials, and promises held out by British political supporters, had availed them nothing. The British Government and the aims of British imperialism opposed them like a vast intangible force. Though they had partly stopped Zionism, they themselves had gained nothing. The prospect of a puppet Arab kingdom in the hills only attracted a few pro-British careerists. So they felt baffled, angry, defeated; that the

Zionists also opposed Partition did not lessen their bewilderment ; they only thought it a Zionist trick.

For the first few weeks after the *Report* was published Arab nationalist ranks could have been split. More than ever before were they ready to negotiate a reasonable settlement. But neither the British nor the Zionists took the slightest initiative in this direction. Arab public opinion was thrown back on extremism. This gave the Mufti his chance. A month after the publication of the *Report* and after the first shock had passed over, a strong political campaign against the treason of moderate Arab leaders was launched. During the autumn half a dozen outstanding Arabs not belonging to the Mufti's party were calmly assassinated in broad daylight. Resistance to terrorism was all the more easily crushed because of the apparent inviolability of the Mufti. In spite of the accusations voiced in the *Peel Report*, the attitude of the Palestine Government was still one of queer inexplicable separation of the Mufti and the Arab Higher Committee from the terrorist actions committed at their order.

Terrorism was only one side of the Mufti's activities. At Bloudan, a Lebanese summer resort, an ' Arab Congress for Palestine ' was called at the beginning of September. For all its publicity the Congress was a bad failure. British and French pressure kept outside Arabs away. But a stronger Nazi and Fascist tinge was apparent in the speeches. Soon afterwards Baldur von Schirach, the German youth leader, publicly toured Iraq, Syria, and the Lebanon, half secretly meeting the Arab leaders. A wave of propaganda in favour of the Palestine and other Arabs was launched from Italian and German stations.

Did the Mufti expect help from outside ? Or did he sense that the support of Palestine officials could not indefinitely shield him from the hostility of a cold but implacable British Government ? Who knows—but he went too far. At the end of September Yelland Andrews, District Commissioner for Galilee, one of the few Palestine

officials who might have been described as pro-Jewish,<sup>1</sup> was shot on leaving the English Church at Nazareth. His assistant commissioner narrowly escaped a second bullet.

For three days there was silence in the country. Then the British Government acted. The Arab Higher Committee was declared illegal, dissolved, and its members arrested. Haj Amin el Husseini, the Mufti, was deposed from all his official positions. Jamal Husseini and Auni Abdul Hadi, two of the most prominent leaders, avoided arrest, the first by escape from Palestine, the second by being out of the country. The remaining members of the Arab Higher Committee were promptly sent into exile in the Seychelle Islands.<sup>2</sup>

Would the Arabs rise? Against all the fears of the pro-Arabs in London, nothing happened. Thus encouraged, the Government struck at the Mufti himself, who had taken refuge in the Mosque of Omar. But this time the police were too late. Information had leaked through; before he could be arrested, the Mufti had escaped in disguise from Jerusalem, and was found off the Lebanese coast by coastguards and interned by the French.

The Palestine Arabs were now leaderless. But this was no solution.

Certain developments in Syria aided the Mufti. The Damascus Arabs who now formed the Syrian Government could no longer maintain the private armed forces they had built up in opposition. For very little money these

<sup>1</sup> Great reliance had apparently been placed on him for carrying out the technical side of possible partition proposals. The Peel Commission wrote of him: 'We desire to make special mention of the services of Mr. L. Y. Andrews, development officer, who also was in constant attendance on the Commission and upon whom was placed the responsibility for the arrangements of our tour and our visits to the districts. This he discharged with conspicuous success. His wide local knowledge and long acquaintance with the country was invaluable.'

<sup>2</sup> They included Khalidi, the Arab Mayor of Jerusalem, Bin Gussein, the eighteen-stone leader of the youth movement, modelled on Roehm (in every way), and Fuad Saba, the economist, who could now ponder over the problem of manhole covers and sanitary belts from an adequate distance.

gunmen were now ready to operate in Palestine in the Mufti's service. But times had changed. Most of the senior British officials in Palestine had been changed too. Sir Charles Tegart, an expert from India, had been sent to reorganize the Police. One fully equipped division of troops was permanently stationed in the country. The handling of the Arabs was no longer so delicate. In their first clash with the troops on Christmas Day 1937, an armed band of two hundred Syrian Arabs was destroyed, losing half their numbers, while the remainder fled to Syria.

But sporadic terrorism was almost impossible to stop. Jews, Arabs, and occasional Britishers, were murdered. Slowly the life of the country became paralysed. After one particularly bad murder of five Jews, Jewish retaliation flared up in a short burst, publicly disavowed by the Zionist leaders, and immediately followed by some thirty or forty arrests. After this the Jews relapsed into fatalist acceptance of disorder, and Palestine at the end of 1937 was an entirely different country compared to what it had been two years before. The Jews were becoming impoverished, the Arabs more so. Zionism had come to a standstill, Arab revolt had for the moment become aimless. And on January 8, 1938, the British Government published a new White Paper, in which both Jews and Arab hopes were disappointed. Partition was neither brought nearer, nor rejected. Obviously the British Government was waiting for the major political situation to become more defined.



*Part Four*

ONLY YESTERDAY—PALESTINE, 1937-38



## CHAPTER XVII

### LAST STAND OF THE JEWISH MIDDLE CLASS

**W**HEN considering the social or political problems of Palestine, one should remember that it really is almost entirely a post-War country.

The country the British took over in 1918 was a half-derelict Turkish province, poorest and least important of the Mediterranean countries, with a population of 750,000, including 70,000 Jews badly impoverished by the War, and 680,000 Arabs, mostly half-starved fellaheen and nomads.

The two post-War decades, 1918-38, have been characterized by British colonial administration, Zionist immigration and investments on a vast scale, the appearance of new urbanized Arabs and Arab nationalism, and the swift modernization of the greater part of the country.

At the beginning of 1938 the total population was 1,450,000 (nearly doubled), including 420,000 Jews and over 1,000,000 Arabs. The country had gained a modern (or more or less modern) administration, new railways, ports, a road network. New cities had sprung up, above all Tel Aviv, with its Jewish population of 160,000. Scientific agricultural methods had been introduced by the Jews. An astonishing development of citrus plantations, representing an investment of twenty million pounds, has taken place in the coastal belt ; since 1936 Palestine has been the first orange and grape-fruit exporting country in the world (almost half the citrus plantations are owned by Palestine Arabs). Swift Jewish commercial and industrial development has also affected the Arabs. Systematic drainage and amelioration has banished the former epidemic diseases.



New education systems, Jewish and Arab, exist side by side ; extensive health and social services, Jewish and Government, have been established.

The Jewish sector of Palestine is as up-to-date as any in Europe and America. In the Palestine Arab sector the population has shown the highest rate of natural increase ever recorded anywhere. Arab health and vital statistics have already surpassed those of East European countries.

The only problem not solved, in fact steadily worsening, is that of racial or national strife.

What is Jewish Palestine—nucleus of a new state, or temporary refuge ?

Viewed from abroad, the situation of the Jews in Palestine seems highly precarious : that of a small Jewish minority in the midst of hostile Arabs, dependent upon British policy, unhappily involved in Mediterranean politics.

But in Palestine itself entirely the opposite effect is created : that of a surprisingly complete, firmly-rooted, and self-contained national unit. Here are Jewish villages and fields, Jewish towns with their industrial quarters and shopping centres with traffic blocks in brand-new streets, thronged by crowds of recently-arrived Jews, excited and nationalist, and no longer regarding themselves as strangers in Palestine.

The Jewish sector to-day has a population of something between 400,000 to 450,000 ; with natural increase and the present trickle of immigration it will presumably approach half a million in a few years' time. Half a million ! In Europe it would be almost nothing, but in the Middle East the Palestine Jews already wield considerable economic and political and even military power. They are already a factor to be considered in Mediterranean politics.

What of their future ? It can hardly be known. In fact, the picture of Palestine, like that of Zionism, is not fixed. It has shifted and changed continually with the successive waves of immigrants who came pouring into the country and who differed so much from each other :

the early Russian idealists and Rothschild charity settlers of the 'eighties and 'nineties, then the first organized Zionist workers, after the War the flood of radical post-War youth from Russia and Poland ready to build Jewish socialism in Palestine, the swarm of small Jewish traders and capitalists of the years 1924-27, the German-Jewish business and professional men of 1933, and following them Jewish immigrants from all over the world, from poverty-stricken Yemenite and Persian Jews to Jewish *rentiers* who brought a spirit of suburban villadom to the stony hills of Jerusalem, until, when immigration subsided again in 1937, over 400,000 Jews had been brought to Palestine.

In spite of its miniature dimensions Jewish Palestine seems to show a bewildering variety of human types, from the intellectual Jewish co-operative farmers in Jezreel to Jewish real estate speculators in the Tel Aviv cafés, wiry Jewish stevedores from Salonika working among the breakers in the Tel Aviv port, Yemenite Jews living seven or eight to a room in the new Tel Aviv slums, middle class German Jews living a European middle class life in their villas on Mount Carmel or the suburbs of Jerusalem. But this variety, like the polyglot atmosphere inevitably created by recent immigrants drawn from every possible country, is deceptive. It is only on the surface. In fact, closer examination of Jewish Palestine immediately reveals a striking Jewish psychological unity, even between immigrants from totally different countries, and this is easily intelligible. As far as the scattered Jews can be called a nation, they are almost entirely a middle class nation, with few and not very deep class distinctions. Jewish solidarity has always been a by-word, both among Jews and their opponents. Recent historical events have heightened the consciousness of common Jewish fate; throughout Palestine there is a pervading sense that this is a common refuge—a last stand of the Jewish middle class, in which every Jew in Palestine is concerned. It is this haunting sense of common fate and common struggle which gives the Zionist spirit in Palestine its unquestioned strength and vitality. The Palestine Jews

know they have nothing to lose, that this is a last stand, and this knowledge has enabled them to rise to the greatest tests and to defend themselves with rare courage. No Jewish settlement in Palestine has yet yielded to attack, and communications across the most dangerous roads have never yet been allowed to lapse. It is this same rather desperate spirit which has enabled untrained and, for the most part propertyless, Jewish immigrants to change almost at once into farmers, mechanics, or building workers—and to succeed surprisingly well, and sufficiently fast to adapt themselves to the new conditions of the country.

How long this vital impulse will endure cannot be prophesied. The Arab background, hostile and inert, surrounds this miniature Jewish 'State' on every side. But one thing is already clear ; the impact of Zionism has been strong enough to transform its surroundings as much as it may become transformed by them. And in the brief present period in which one can look ahead Zionism has done a remarkable thing ; it has created a new unit of specifically Jewish middle class civilization in the Eastern Mediterranean, and created it almost overnight.

This new Jewish unit is not very large. Immigration proceeded too fast to spread evenly over Palestine. Jewish settlement is highly concentrated. The total Jewish land amounts to only 1,400,000 dunam, or less than 500 square miles. Three-quarters of the Jewish population lives in the urban areas of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa, and rather more than half the population lives within ten miles from the centre of Tel Aviv. Only one-fifth (or, if the immense difficulties be taken into account, as much as one-fifth !) is engaged in farming, the remaining four-fifths in commerce and industry, building, transport, the professions.

The largest centre and the focal point of Jewish Palestine is Tel Aviv, a hundred per cent Jewish city, with a population of 150,000, which has sprung up so unexpectedly on a stretch of empty sands. Tel Aviv is the centre of the citrus belt ; it also has a considerable range of small Jewish in-

dustries, and is to-day trying to live on these and on a rather diminished building programme and tourist traffic, and on entrepôt trade helped by the recent opening of its own port. North and south of Tel Aviv, in the rather narrow citrus zone, are a number of Jewish citrus-growing colonies, of which the largest have already reached the size of small country towns. Thirty miles away from the coast, rather isolated from the rest of Jewish Palestine, lies Jerusalem, which has a Jewish population of 75,000, partly of Oriental origin, and contains the Hebrew University and central offices of the Jewish Agency and other Jewish public institutions. Haifa, steadily growing in importance as an international port, has a population of 110,000, of which rather more than half is Jewish, and again rather more than half of this Jewish population consists of organized workers. South of Haifa lies another and rather smaller Jewish citrus zone. West of Haifa, in the Plain of Jezreel, a chain of Jewish agricultural communes extends as far as Beisan in the Jordan Valley. In the hills of Galilee there are certain scattered Jewish agricultural areas, and a rather larger group of villages beside Lake Tiberias and in the Jordan Valley, round the hydro-electric works of the Palestine Electric Corporation. About ten thousand Jews live in the two ancient cities of Tiberias and Safed. In the Upper Jordan Valley, the recently required Huleh swamps will, after suitable drainage, provide another fairly large colonization area. A few small mixed-farming villages have recently been established north of Acre on the borders of Palestine and the Lebanon.

This is all, the nucleus of a Jewish State which can be crossed by car from one extreme end to the other in three hours, and which in several places is only a few miles broad.

Although the Jewish area in Palestine is so small, it yet contains a significant agricultural hinterland in which every square foot of land has been intensively and tenaciously utilized.

Jewish success in agriculture was unexpected ; the Jews

have for centuries been an urban people. But if a real foothold was to be gained in Palestine, a measure of agricultural settlement round the towns was essential. The return of the Jews to the land, to agriculture and simple village life, has been a vital part of Zionist mysticism. The best of the young immigrants volunteered as land workers. Jewish agriculture had the consistent support of the Zionist Organization and of the Histadrut. To-day, the Jewish orange and grape-fruit zone in the coastal belt has an export of 7 million boxes of citrus fruit, which will shortly rise to 10 million boxes, or more than the combined citrus exports of South Africa and Brazil. But citrus farming, mostly a capitalist venture, has become largely rationalized and industrialized. Jewish mixed farming, far harder to establish in the difficult climatic and soil conditions of Palestine, has been mainly developed in the labour settlements on large scale and scientifically-planned lines. Scientific research institutions of the Zionist Organization and Histadrut and Zionist loan and credit organizations have given decisive help. The agricultural experience of the Arab villagers—what there was of it—was also drawn upon. To-day, as a result, Jewish farmers are carrying on grain, fodder, fruit, vegetable, poultry and dairy farming with distinct success and by up-to-date methods which, for all that the Arabs have learnt and imitated them to a certain extent, still sharply divide every Jewish settlement from the neighbouring Arab fields, and which are unique in the East. As only one example: By skilful cross-breeding of Swiss or Frisian stock with the native Damascene cattle, the average yield of Jewish cows has been brought up to four thousand litres per year as opposed to the seven hundred litres of the Arab village cow—an example showing how much, political issues apart and if one could only assume a rational social order, Jewish scientific progress could have benefited the whole country!

Since the beginning of 1937 Jewish agriculture like, every other Jewish activity in Palestine, has suffered badly

from the economic depression, and the problem of cheap competition and marketing the agricultural produce has again become a crucial one which, it seems, cannot be solved without adequate customs barriers.

Jewish commerce and industry could, of course, be more easily developed ; the commercial tradition of the Jews gave them a ready start. In Palestine, Jewish industry and trade are carried on by a large number of small but at the same time remarkably modern enterprises. The whole country has been largely electrified by the Palestine Electric Corporation from its Jordan hydro-electric works and large power-stations in Haifa and Tel Aviv, and on the whole, wherever possible, the latest machinery has been installed even in the smallest factories. Similarly, technical and working experience has grown parallel with industrial development. To-day the standards of Jewish workers, mechanics, or technicians in Palestine are as high as that in any country.

Where the Jewish community, and particularly the Zionist leadership, has been remarkably successful is in co-ordinating this feverish mass development into a distinct, organized, self-contained social unit. The impact of Zionism and ready Jewish solidarity have played their part in the swift growth of Jewish self-government, and, as it is called, ' the conquest and fortification of Jewish positions.' Almost half of the Jewish population is organized in the trade unions and co-operatives of the Histadrut. But, even outside the Histadrut, Jewish Palestine rests on a complex structure of co-operatives of every type, and of interlocking and co-ordinated municipal, national, and semi-public institutions. When necessary all Jewish classes have collaborated without question, as in the case of the enthusiastic construction of the Tel Aviv port, or in the grim maintenance of the Jewish military self-defence organization, which can dispose over a force of several thousand trained and armed men, and, in spite of its illegal character, has never failed to function efficiently.

The same Zionist spirit and Jewish solidarity have also

stood behind the quick social organization of the Jewish community, in its way no less vital for Jewish survival than Jewish self-defence. That this social organization should have been built up on European lines during crowded immigration years might hardly have seemed feasible. Yet heightened Jewish solidarity and an impressive talent for organization achieved the unexpected. As fast as the immigrants came they were co-ordinated into educational and medical services. The Jews are a literate people ; in Palestine they manage to make it possible for nearly all the unruly Palestine Jewish children to be included in a reasonably good education system ranging from kindergartens to secondary schools. Hospitals and medical services are excellent—the utmost use was made of the political accident which brought—literally—thousands of trained and qualified medical men into the country. Health statistics have been brought up to the level of Western Europe ; infant care, particularly, is exemplary. In spite of the teeming Oriental Jewish population, the infant mortality figure has been kept as low as sixty-five per thousand, a figure only exceeded by the most advanced Western countries.<sup>1</sup> Though Zionist contributions from abroad have undoubtedly helped to maintain these standards, the major factor, nevertheless, has again been discipline and organization in the country itself.

That the Jews are a cultured people can hardly be questioned. But what specific national culture could they build on their own ? In Palestine it is a curious mixture of the international with the narrowly nationalist. The revival of Hebrew (a purely literary language for two thousand years) into a spoken tongue has been successful against all expectations. It is already the conquering mother tongue for the young generation and for considerably older circles. The small Palestine Jewish community supports four daily Hebrew newspapers, the largest of which, the Histadrut newspaper, *Davar*, boasting a circulation of 25,000, ten Hebrew weeklies, and a swarm of minor

<sup>1</sup> And not by countries like France, Italy, or even Germany.

periodical, specialist or illustrated Hebrew publications. Countless books, from European classics to penny dreadfuls, have been translated into Hebrew. Writers, grammarians, translators, and enthusiastic amateurs are busy shaping, modernizing, and enlarging the new language. Side by side with this neo-Hebrew renaissance the Jewish immigrants cling to their cultural past ; all the newspapers in the world can be bought, and are bought and read in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa. The Palestine Symphony Orchestra, evidence of Jewish musical talent, which has gained the support of Toscanini himself, has already established its reputation well beyond Palestine. There are four permanent local theatrical companies, one of which, the Habimah, formerly of Moscow, and representing the highest phase of Russian-Jewish expressionist art, has toured Europe and America with outstanding success. A swarm of young writers, critics, painters, sculptors, actors, and dancers practise their art in Palestine, a few of them excellent, a good many very bad, but all taking themselves as seriously as they are taken by the Palestine public.

The whole of this Jewish life, whether agricultural or urban, economic, social, or cultural, follows a certain definite pattern ; and this pattern is determined by the consciousness that in the Diaspora, the Jewish position is growing worse and worse, and therefore in Palestine every aspect of Jewish life must be feverishly consolidated.

The same consciousness lies behind the quick measure of self-government which has been built up.

The whole of Jewish Palestine is democratically run. Of course there are class distinctions, but just as the crowds in the streets of Tel Aviv seem remarkably fluid, undifferentiated, so, in the continuous flux of Palestine, these distinctions do not cut very deeply. The orange exporters, for instance, form one close economic interest. There is the Manufacturers' Association, at times sharply opposed to the Histadrut ; workers' and householders' representatives engage in heated debates in the Tel Aviv municipality ;



the land holdings of the Jewish National Fund have aroused the opposition of private Jewish capitalists. But these differences are mild enough. National issues loom too large. The Jewish Agency Executive, chosen by a democratically elected Zionist Congress, both represents the Palestine Jews before the British Government and in the last resort arbitrates between the various Jewish interests. Indeed, the uniform, fluid social character of Jewish Palestine shows distinctly that it is only an outpost, that as a miniature Jewish State it is only a Jewish foothold in Palestine.

Yet at the same time the Jewish National Home is a going concern. The foothold has been gained. The difficulties of the country, of acclimitization, economic and social transformation of Jewish immigrants, have all been overcome. 'It is impossible, we believe,' the Peel Commission wrote in 1937, 'for any unprejudiced observer to see the National Home, and not to wish it well.'

In fact, only one thing has not been achieved, not even in theory : the establishment of passable relations between the National Home and even a single section of the Arab world which surrounds it on every side.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ‘THE ARAB DOES NOT EXIST’

‘**T**HE Arab does not exist !’ Nine-tenths of Zionist attitude towards the Arabs could be qualified by these few words. Yet to any outside observer Jewish-Arab relations stand out as the crucial factor deciding the Zionist issue. The Peel Commission, continually impressed by this contradiction, wrote :

‘ It is the same with science. The Daniel Sieff Research Institute at Rehovoth is equipped with the most delicate modern instruments ; the experiments conducted there are watched by chemists all over the world ; yet from its windows can be seen the hills inhabited by a backward peasantry, who regard it only as a demonstration of a power they hate and fear, and who would like, no doubt, when their blood is up, to destroy it ’ (p. 117).

Are the Jews aware of this hostile world surrounding them on every side ? They are aware, and yet not aware, both at the same time : a contradictory psychological state and deliberate ability not to see, very possible under the influence of the exalted Zionist state of mind.

At the 1936 Levant Fair in Tel Aviv one Zionist pavilion contained a huge photograph showing a group of young Jews and Jewesses in workers’ clothes striding in unbroken line towards the observer, conveying, as intended, an impression of irresistible penetration—the new army of Jewish conquest.

A distinguished English visitor, a pro-Zionist but startled by this picture, commented about it : ‘ And then they wonder why the Arab reaches for his rifle ! ’

No Arab saw the picture, because no Arab visited the 1936 Levant Fair. In the Zionist Press this boycott was

taken as another sign of Arab extremism, racial chauvinism, and lack of joint effort for the common good of Palestine.

The curious point is that such views are held by men who in all other respects are intelligent, educated and broad-minded, whose minds are not closed at all. One might therefore assume that they are simply not aware of the Arab issue and of Arab dangers.

Objectively this might be questioned because the feverish Zionist drive for a majority in Palestine proves their awareness of the danger.

But subjectively the Zionist assumption that such a Zionist majority could be obtained without major resistance by the Arabs, implies that the Palestine Arabs do not exist, at least not as a separate nation with its own aims for national survival which would have to be reckoned with.

The history of Zionist policy towards the Arabs is that of this illusion, but an illusion fanatically upheld!

The illusion started, of course, with the birth of the Zionist movement itself. To the early Zionists, who only knew Palestine as a Turkish province without special mention in geography books, the presence of a small Arab population meant nothing. Nordau's phrase '*Das Land ohne Volk dem Volk ohne Land*' exactly sums up the early Zionist claim. Nor was this ignorance surprising. The early pre-War Zionists, typical Central European intellectuals, were anything but Orientalists. Under the Turks Palestine looked an empty country, poor and desolate. The small Levantine merchant communities and the few hundred thousand poor fellaheen seemed little more than a temporary squatter population. If Palestine were built up as a Jewish country, surely these fellaheen must also profit from its new prosperity; they would either become absorbed in the new state, or else transferred. Compared to the growing problem of millions of Jews in Europe, compared with the forces Zionism aimed to arouse, the problem of transferring an Oriental population—something the Turks had frequently done—seemed of a very minor order.

As we have said, that the early Zionists dreaming in Cracow and Basle and Chicago should think this is not surprising. But that this messianic belief in Palestine as a purely Jewish country, so vital to Zionism, should be able to survive shock after shock of reality and endure even to the present day, after the Arabs have made their presence so clearly and unmistakably felt—that is remarkable proof of the Jewish urge for clinging fanatically to any hope promising even a partial way out from the Jewish problem.

But how, in the face of Palestine realities, could such a belief be sensibly maintained? Well, of course, it was not a steady belief, but continually shattered by events, only to be rebuilt at once. Before the War there was little reason to doubt the emptiness of the country. The Balfour Declaration seemed to reaffirm this belief. Although the Zionist leaders knew how limited the British promise was and how precarious their own position, they could not help being deceived by their own success. Fifty-two nations, with Britain at their head, had officially recognized the Jewish right to Palestine. What illusions did not blossom during this short period 1918–21!

The Arab riots of 1920 and 1921, announcing the presence of the Palestine Arab people to the world, shattered a good many of these illusions for good. Zionist deceptions about Palestine, which had raised grossly extravagant expectations, now made Jewish disillusion and defection greater than need have been. But, as a number of peaceful years followed, Zionist optimism revived quickly. True, there was an Arab population in Palestine, but this population was poor, weak, and disunited. If the British Government had not kept its first pledge to the Jews, nor gave the Jewish National Home active support, it kept law and order in Palestine, providing the essential protection under which the Zionist work could continue steadily and increase in strength. Ultimately British and Zionist interests must surely coincide. And how could a small Arab population challenge the might of British imperialism—a benevolent policeman keeping order in the country?

On the other side, the plight of nine-tenths of the Arabs under the corrupt feudal regime of the Turks and effendis had been so wretched that the Jewish influx into the country through modernization, even through land-buying and colonization, could only bring them betterment. The Zionists could therefore not only feel sure they were improving the state of the country for Jews and Arabs alike, but that the Arabs, at least the majority of the Arabs, must welcome the changes too, and had no right or cause to oppose Zionism. In fact, that the Palestine Arabs welcomed the Jews was as much part of the Zionist credo as that ultimately any other people hated them—and, indeed, one view was the psychological counterpart of the other.

Between 1921 and 1928 a hundred thousand Jews were brought without trouble into the country. This successful first stage of colonization led up to the remarkable outburst of enthusiasm at the Zionist Congress of 1929, when the enlarged Jewish Agency was founded to speed up colonization and put the issue beyond doubt. Because of the deliberate lull of false security, the savage Arab rising of August 1929, tearing through the illusion, was all the more of a shock, before which the Jews were at first almost paralysed. Then, when Zionist reaction set in, it was on the same hysterical lines. No logical or political conclusions were drawn. On the contrary, the fixed belief of Zionism opposed all conclusions. The riots were due to criminal Arab wickedness. The class issue was dragged in. The rising had been engineered by a clique of Arab reactionaries who feared the progress of the Arab masses through the modernization of the country by the Jews. That was all. In Palestine and abroad this view was convincingly put forward by the Zionists. At the same time the extent and the violent nature of Arab hostility had left a heritage of insecurity in the country. There was already a strange dissonance in Jewish Palestine ; even while Arab peacefulness was proclaimed to the world Jewish defences were strengthened. A certain realist minority even proposed Jewish-Arab negotiations and agreements. But already

a year or two later, in view of the Hitler disaster, all such scruples were forgotten. And, during the hectic days of the post-Hitler immigration, uneasiness vanished too. Everything that happened before this flood of immigration, and the magic golden stream of capital pouring into the country, became prehistorical. The most extravagant hopes could again be held. Palestine as solution to the Jewish problem ? Only too readily, too passionately, did the Jews surrender to this optimism. Unfriendly British officials and hostile Arab nationalists might create obstacles and disturbances, but the flood-gates had been opened, they could do nothing against such a rush. A Jewish majority and the Jewish State seemed already within sight. The Arabs need not be considered.

In the main, the Zionists were neither imperialists nor brutal, but kindly and tolerant men. They did not want to harm the Arabs. Vaguely, they did not even want to oust them. At the moment the Arabs were obviously benefiting and becoming enriched, and that was all that was required. Somehow they would become absorbed or transferred, and the question would be solved. But in the meantime there need be no concern about them. Faced with the irrationality of Nazism, a far larger number of Jews were ready to agree that the early Zionists had been right. The issue was only twofold : that of Palestine and that of the Jews of the world.

Examining the Jewish attitude to the Arabs during the years 1933-6, it would be difficult to find it other than a frantic belief that the Arab did not exist. Already the official Zionist name for Palestine—Eretz Israel, Land of Israel—emphasized this attitude. True, this was the ancient Biblical name of the country. But its modern revival signified the political demand of Zionism, and it did so in Arab eyes. The education of Jewish children in Palestine was nationalist in a strangely calm and matter-of-fact way. Aggressiveness was not preached, only peaceful penetration. The Jewish children were simply taught that the plight of the Jews was intolerable and that Palestine was, by

historic right and international recognition, theirs to colonize. Colonization should even extend beyond the borders of the country. Arab opposition could not exist ; if it did, it was due to obscurantism or wickedness. That the inevitable answer to this calm assumption was similar Arab education towards Arab national rights and conquest by force, was disregarded.

In fact, nothing was done to placate Arab suspicions, and almost nothing omitted which could rouse them. No contact was established with even a single Arab group. To the Arabs Zionism could not but appear uncanny and peculiarly malevolent. Individual Jews they encountered were often friendly and kindly and extraordinarily helpful. But, as a whole, Zionism excluded them like an intangible wall. Statistics showing Jewish growth and progress were continually held before their eyes. The terminology of Zionism was militant. Expansion of colonization was described as the conquest of new areas—the conquest of Galilee, the conquest of the ports, the conquest of the hill country. When Jewish labourers were substituted for Arabs in some branch of work, this was called the conquest of such work. To buy a new Jewish product, previously supplied only by Arabs, was openly proclaimed as an advance. Incessant flag-waving and the most extravagant Zionist patriotic programmes were carried on as though the Arab had no susceptibilities, and as though the Zionists tried to make the Arabs believe that these programmes could really be carried out. In the crowded streets and cafés of Tel Aviv, particularly isolated from the rest of Palestine during the hectic years 1934–6, no doubts were permitted that the Zionist programme was feasible, because the need of solving the Jewish problem was so great that it had to be feasible. Even when it was seen that a more and more closely knit national movement was arising out of the million Arabs in Palestine, that even so primitive and dis-united a people could be stirred to common action, this was disregarded. Or else the class issue was dragged in. Young socialist Jews, even though Zionism had done nothing to

benefit the Arab peasantry *directly*, said with perfect conviction that if they were Arab peasants they would, for the sake of indirect benefits, be ardent Zionists. To the last this spirit of blindness was maintained, so that when the crash came and the Arabs rose in 1936 the Jewish reaction was the hysterical one of a psychologically unprepared people. True, the Jews defended themselves with rare courage and discipline, but, faced with Arab violence, instead of asking themselves in what way they could have aroused such widespread burning hatred among a primitive people, they proclaimed to the world that there Arabs were not only primitive savages, but branded by their own acts as without moral sense, an evil force with which one could not bargain.

Or alternatively, the Arabs were an innocent people ready to love the Jews who were showering such benefits upon them, had they not been misled by unscrupulous leaders.

But, in any case, the Arab attack was aimed at historical Jewish rights—the right to colonize freely in all Palestine, a right arising out of the catastrophic Jewish situation, and one internationally acknowledged. So how could the Arab attack be anything but wickedness, and how could Jewish resistance not be uncompromising? In their inability to see the Arab point of view, in their frantic belief that surely public opinion must recognize the justice of the Jewish cause, that surely the British must realize that British and Zionist interests went together, the Jews were politically paralysed. Their own self-deception prevented them from recognizing the million Arabs of Palestine as a political factor, with whom accommodation must be sought. And so beyond tenacious self-defence, the Jews had no policy whatsoever in Palestine, least of all towards moderate Arabs, and in these bitter years of struggle without compromise the prosperity of Palestine, the impetus of Zionism, all were lost. The Jews had relatively tremendous power in Palestine, but it was hardly used. And even in 1938, when the Partition Plan seemed to save something from



the wreckage of Zionist hopes, it was only a minority of the Zionists who could break through the hysterical make-belief, and realize that Palestine was a mixed country, that even any Jewish state must inevitably be mixed Jewish and Arab, and that the difficulties of establishing tolerable Jewish and Arab relations, vital to any continuance of Zionism, were only just beginning.

But the chief factor in maintaining this unreal wall between the Jews and Arab had been the powerful General Federation of Jewish Labour in Palestine, usually known by its Hebrew abbreviation of Histadrut.

## CHAPTER XIX

### HISTADRUT

**M**ENTION of the Histadrut must run like a continuous thread through any narrative of Zionism and Palestine. The Histadrut, of course, is unlike any other trade union ; it is useless to make comparisons. If one can define it at all, it is first a Zionist colonization co-operative, and only in the second place a trade union defending the class interests of its members. This is its essential character, which all those who mistook it, for instance, for an instrument for the propagation of socialism, have had to learn to their cost.

When the first organized Zionist workers came from Russia to Palestine the country was not empty. There was a considerable Arab population. The petty farmers in the Jewish colonies had already become typical small planters, employing cheap hired Arab workers who already tended to outnumber the Jewish population in the colonies. The Zionist new-comers, already disliked on account of their radical and atheist outlook, met with intense suspicion and hostility when demanding priority of employment for themselves as Jews. There was a dismal stagnant atmosphere in the colonies. The Turkish authorities were unfriendly.

It was under these conditions that the young Russian Zionists set out to ' regenerate the Jewish people ' through a return to the land and physical labour. It seemed a mad dream, but these young Jews, inspired by nationalism, had the calm determination of their ideal.

The growing Jewish problem at their back, of which they were abnormally conscious, permitted them no

doubts. A new Jewish state led by a new Jewish working class must arise in Palestine. Already in Russia these young Jewish students and dreamers had worked out their two guiding principles. The Jewish state in Palestine must be no planters' state, employing a mass of cheap native labour: only Jews, it was laid down, must be employed in one and every Jewish enterprise. For this end the Jewish workers in Palestine must become so strong that they would control Zionism and Jewish colonization. In the early days, in arid Turkish Palestine, this seemed a remote dream, but what these young Zionists lacked in numbers they made up in fanatical determination. Through strikes, moral pressure, collective working, living and bargaining, they forced the unwilling Jewish planters to give them work in the Jewish villages. Their movement in Russia remained alive. They co-operated willingly with the official Zionist Organization. Just before the War there were already two thousand organized Jewish workers in Palestine, some working as hired labourers in the colonies, others settled in the first of those collective farms in which the Jewish workers of Palestine found their stronghold and their ideal.

Though the Histadrut was not founded till later, its three guiding principles—Jewish regeneration—through return to labour and village life, only Jews to work in Jewish enterprise, a strong labour and co-operative movement—had already then become crystallized. Political socialism, the organization of Jewish and Arab workers for a joint class struggle, were hardly considered. How could they exist? The Jewish workers were only a handful; their political struggle would have evaporated in a vacuum. And for twenty, thirty years, except for one brief post-War interval, when a small and very youthful 'Left' minority tried unsuccessfully to turn the Histadrut into an instrument for political Jewish-Arab class struggle, the Zionist labour movement in Palestine, always under the same strong leadership, never deviated from these principles. If Zionism aimed at setting up the Jewish state

in Palestine, the Histadrut was the core of the movement, leading the Jews back to work and the dignity of workers' life. As soon as the working immigrants came they were enrolled in the Histadrut, trained, provided with their first jobs through the Histadrut labour exchange, helped to settle, and protected ; as far as possible they were drawn into the network of co-operatives, the miniature 'workers' commonwealth', which the Histadrut had built up.

Additional numbers meant additional strength. During the great immigration rush of 1932-36 the Histadrut, thanks to capable leadership, expanded even faster than the rest of Jewish Palestine. In 1938 it united almost 100,000 Jewish workers in one single centralized organization.

Of course, Jewish working-class life in Palestine has changed very much. The great majority of Histadrut members are to-day ordinary hired workers in capitalist, or at least primitive capitalist enterprise. And yet much of the original inspiration is still unchanged. The Histadrut should still be regarded as a Zionist colonization co-operative rather than as a mere trade union. Its membership still includes middle-class elements and most of the farming smallholders. The Histadrut still engages in its own colonization, parallel with the Zionist Organization. The agricultural communes and smallholding villages still form a vital part of the Histadrut, and agricultural settlement and colonization has priority over all its other functions.

Numerically, of course, the bulk of the Histadrut membership has shifted to the towns ; it has almost 30,000 members in Tel Aviv alone and 20,000 in Haifa. Organized from the head offices in Tel Aviv, the 'workers' commonwealth' has become a highly centralized network of countless co-operatives and workers' institutions. It is difficult to speak too highly of these institutions, or of the strong spirit of comradeship by which they are animated. Some co-operatives are locally organized by Labour Councils, some directly from Histadrut offices, but the whole

structure is closely interlocked. There are the Histadrut bank and credit and loan societies (helped by the long Jewish experience in dealing with credit), building and contracting co-operatives employing some of the foremost engineers and architects, responsible for a third of the Jewish building in Palestine, including the biggest jobs; a selling agency for the agricultural produce of the labour settlements, a wholesale buying agency (each with a turnover of half a million pounds); scores of transport and small producers' co-operatives. In addition there is a magnificent Histadrut health insurance service with its own hospitals, dispensaries, sanatoriums, a network of doctors (and a budget approaching that of the Palestine Government Health Department); a housing society which has helped 8,000 Histadrut families to settle in special workers' suburbs. The Histadrut runs its own school system (biased towards working class education), its own daily newspaper *Davar*, a host of minor publications, its own publishing house, theatre, and concerts, its sports and scout organization, its labour youth movement in Palestine, and its immigrant training groups in Europe, and, finally, it largely organizes and dominates the Jewish military self-defence.

The whole system, built up during thirty years of Jewish immigration, forms one single strong organization of half Jewish Palestine—indeed, the nucleus of a small Jewish workers' commonwealth, and the stronghold of unflagging Zionist spirit.

On the other side, the Histadrut is a trade union and acts as such for that majority of its members who work as hired employees in capitalist enterprise. Here again the position is contradictory. As Zionists, the Jewish workers were dependent upon an influx of Jewish capitalists and capital into Palestine, yet as Jewish workers they had not come to Palestine to be exploited. They had a long tradition of passionate Jewish working class struggle in Eastern Europe behind them. And, in fact, the various militant unions of the Histadrut have been surprisingly

successful in forcing (wherever possible) European wage standards, decent working conditions, and collective contracts upon reluctant capitalists. On the whole, the Histadrut has dominated the Jewish middle class in Palestine, and not vice versa. Conversely, the Histadrut itself acts as labour exchange; available work is allotted to workers strictly according to seniority, family circumstances, etc., and this has helped a great deal to alleviate the persistent unemployment situation of the last two years.

In its own way, it has been a magnificent effort. True, the Jewish workers are of educated middle class origin, but the great majority of them were harassed and penniless refugees. The Histadrut found these immigrants work, gathered them into its ranks, gave them a social and spiritual background, often a chance to settle on the land, looked after their health, housing, and children, and, in this way, helped many thousands of otherwise lost refugees to a life of creative self-respect. And so the Histadrut has come to be the embodiment of the social ideals of the Palestine Jewish workers. Solidarity among the members is almost unquestioned. During the last years of unemployment the Histadrut could repeatedly tax its working members for the benefit of the unemployed, and the response was almost universal. The great majority of the Jewish workers feel class-conscious enough. Everywhere the red flag is in evidence, and international causes are stressed. The Palestine Jewish Labour Party has already become a well-known member body of the Second International. In February 1934 the Histadrut workers lined up in long queues and within a few hours raised several thousand pounds for the cause of the Vienna workers. In 1936, in the midst of economic crisis and riot, they raised a similar sum for Spain.

There was only one gap—a tragic gap—in this international outlook, and that was right at home, in the complex relation between the Histadrut and the Arab workers.

While the Histadrut was frantically engaged in colonizing Jewish workers it had little time for the neighbouring Arabs. The two communities in Palestine were almost in isolation ; almost, but not quite, and with both communities striving for segregation perpetual conflict followed. The great difficulty lay in the sub-European standards of living of the Arabs, which made it possible for Arab workers and Arab agricultural produce to undercut the Jews, particularly because the Histadrut had organized the Jewish workers and tried to enforce its high standards. In a capitalist Palestine Jewish capitalist employers inevitably tended to turn towards the cheapest labour—local Arabs or the even more primitive Arab immigrants. The process could be endless ; Palestine and the surrounding countries formed an unlimited reservoir of cheap labour. And so the Histadrut barred the way and insisted on a ‘ Zionist policy ’, which meant that Jewish workers, and in fact only organized Jewish workers, could be employed in Jewish ventures. For the last twenty years the Histadrut has fought fiercely for this principle, successfully yet inconclusively. Successfully, because in the Jewish towns a large Jewish working class is now firmly rooted and established, yet inconclusively, because on the fringe of Jewish Palestine, and particularly in the mixed Jewish-Arab citrus zone and in the agricultural districts around the Jewish towns, the difference between Jewish and Arab wages and prices is so marked that the Histadrut has been forced into continuous strikes, agitation, and labour conflicts to enable its members to hold out against Arab encroachment, and these conflicts provided the permanent source of friction between Jewish and Arab workers.

This sharp dividing line was unfortunate, because even while maintaining this solid Jewish front the Histadrut had to make its stand on a second front, that of the Palestine working class.

The Histadrut leaders knew well that this front also existed. That they stressed the class struggle in their political propaganda, denouncing the Arab nationalist

leaders who misled the unwilling Arab masses, shows this feeling that economic forces must inevitably make for common interests of Jewish and Arab workers. But for the moment Jewish immigration, colonization, and the need of and the hope for a Jewish State, absorbed all attention. Class collaboration with Arab workers was pushed into the background, relegated to the time 'when the Jews would be strong enough', always put into vague, diffuse terms, as in the following extract from the Histadrut Memorandum to the Shaw Commission :

'The Jewish worker considers himself both as one of the vanguard of the Jewish people, aiming at national redemption and as a member of labouring humanity, striving for social freedom, for a life of justice and brotherhood, where there is no domination of man by man, or nation by nation. . . . The Jewish labour movement considers the Arab population as an integral part of this country. It is not to be thought that Jewish settlers should displace this population, nor establish themselves at its expense. This would not only be impossible both from the political and the economic standpoint, *but would run counter* to the moral conception lying at the root of the Zionist movement. Jewish immigrants who come to this country to live by their own labour regard the Arab working man as their compatriot and fellow worker, whose needs are their needs and whose future their future.'

But this was not followed up ; partly, perhaps, because time was so desperately short. It was only four years from the beginning of Jewish mass immigration in 1932 to the Arab riots of 1936, and those were hectic and confused years. And thus the Arab workers beyond the fences of Jewish Palestine remained where they were, and the gates of the Histadrut, which many Arabs would gladly have entered, remained unopened.

As a result, the Histadrut has not been very happy on the Palestine working class front. The problem of self-government probably mattered least. The Histadrut leaders knew well that self-government in weak Oriental countries was at best a sham put up by powerful outside interests : to oppose self-government by the



Arab feudal leadership was to deny little to the Arab masses.

Relations between the Palestine working class and the Palestine Government were more important. The Histadrut certainly tried to bring about improvements in labour legislation, minimum hours and wages, protection of women and children, partly by agitation in Palestine or through pressure in Parliament. But because of the dependence of Jewish Palestine upon autocratic British rule these efforts could not achieve much. In its labour legislation Palestine under British rule has remained a benighted country.

But the decisive policy of the Histadrut was that of keeping its ranks purely Jewish.

For a time, indeed, without deviating from the principle of Jewish labour only in Jewish employment, the Histadrut made efforts to establish Arab unions parallel to the Histadrut in Government employment, on the railways and in the ports. A group of keen young Jewish trade union secretaries with natural pro-Arab sympathies gave these unions a surprisingly successful start in 1934-35. The readiness of Arab workers to join class-conscious trade unions was clearly demonstrated. But because these were the boom days, when immigration and colonization entirely absorbed the attention of the Histadrut, support by the whole movement for the Arab unions was neglected—fatally, as it happened. The position of the Arab unions could never become strong. For a while they lingered on, but only as an incident in the main Histadrut policy which led to segregation, and with the first outbreak of racial strife they were badly shaken, and almost vanished.

The Arab workers were hardly deceived. That the Jewish workers had to defend their position, because the Government only seldom and Arab employers never gave them work, could not matter to *unorganized* Arab workers. And the intellectual argument that any Arab in Jewish employment must be replaced by a Jewish Histadrut member, and Arab vegetables sold in the Tel Aviv market

by Histadrut vegetables, so that Jews should do their own work and not exploit Arabs—this was too complex for them to grasp. And so, in Arab eyes, the Histadrut unhappily became a hostile organization, fighting only for Jewish workers, unconcerned with Arabs, and putting racial issues first.

The following extract is taken from an Arab pamphlet containing a good many wild statements—all Arab pamphlets do—yet it gives a true and sad picture of Arab reaction to the Histadrut :

‘ If the Histadrut had been sincere in its protestations of goodwill, if it had been willing to do something to improve the lot of the Arab worker in return for “ penetrating into all spheres of labour ” and turning the country into a Jewish fatherland, it might have done something as follows. It might have employed one quarter Arab labour with its own labour, and have taught the Arabs its own skilled processes, and have paid the Arab the same wage for the same work. In that case the Arab would not have felt the same bitterness that he feels now. The Histadrut never did anything of the sort. It never employed a single Arab if it could help it ; when it was forced to do so, it paid them half the wages it paid to its own men ; and whenever it could oust Arabs from any sphere of work, it did so.’

These arguments are only a half-truth, yet a half-truth all the same. Particularly by Jewish communists, the Histadrut has been denounced as chauvinist, preparing disaster for Palestine by its racial policy. Much of this criticism is grotesquely exaggerated, ignoring the whole weakness of the Jews in Palestine as a minority in a primitive Arab country involved in a vast Mediterranean conflict. Yet the failure of the Histadrut to ally itself with at least a portion of the Arab workers was fatal in that it left no *starting point* for agreement. And so, in spite of individual efforts, the Histadrut did little to relieve the political deadlock in Palestine. By its rigid organization it settled thousands of Jewish workers and helped them to maintain a higher standard of life, but this same rigid organization, shutting off Jewish and Arab workers in two sharply

divided camps, threw the Arab workers who might otherwise have had considerable sympathies for the Histadrut back into the arms of their reactionary class leaders, and so unfortunately intensified the division of the country.

This division, in turn, created the civil war conditions which have led to a sharp fall in the standard of living of Histadrut workers. It is difficult to say what will happen to the Histadrut in these times of inevitable flux and change; to its co-operative structure and the tremendously high standard of labour organization it has set. In a small Jewish State—if it does not crack—it might easily become the instrument of a militant Jewish working class, as turbulent, as revolutionary as any. But, in any case, Jewish Palestine is 'tainted with Marxism', as Goebbels might say, and has a militant, youthful Jewish working class which is bound to exert a decisive effect on the future of Palestine.

That the self-contained world of the Histadrut began to crack in 1936 is not as surprising as that it could have been kept up so long. This cohesion is not only due to Jewish discipline, but to the sustained strength, flexibility, and brilliant opportunism of the Histadrut leadership, that same group of men who had come to Palestine as young Russian-Jewish students before the War, and guided the Histadrut ever since. One must remember that, whatever the outcome, these leaders are men who have had incessant experience of actual political fighting and struggle with money and with social and military weapons, who have organized scouts and fighting detachments and arms smugglers, as well as workers', sick funds, banks, and trade unions.

There is no dictatorship in the Histadrut. Most of its achievements are due to smooth teamwork rather than outstanding individual talent. But the Histadrut has at least one man of outstanding qualities among its leaders.

Berl Katznelson, who has edited the Histadrut newspaper *Davar* since its first day, has been called 'the spirit of the Histadrut'.

A true estimation of his character was given by a friend who said recently : ' Berl is a genius. All his life he has tried to ignore history : to build a Jewish State in Palestine according to his own concept, without capitalism or socialism, the Arabs or the British. To try to ignore history and to get as far as Berl did by sheer spiritual faith—that is genius ! '

Berl Katznelson is a typical Russian Jew, short, sturdy untidy in appearance, with wild hair and dark piercing eyes. He was an early Russian socialist ; not a Marxist, in fact an out and out opponent of historical materialism. As a Jew he was a Jewish nationalist ; socialism was to him a spiritual and idealist renaissance of the working class of each nation. In Palestine he saw Zionism as the renaissance of the Jewish masses. Personal experience of Russian Ghetto conditions made him a Zionist without question. He *believed* in Zionism. Freed from the uncasiness, the not-belonging, the sense of foreignness, the incessant and haunting *malaise* of the Diaspora, the Jews in Palestine would be imbued with an overwhelming sense of buoyant escape ; they would for the first time feel the joy of being straight, free human beings in a country of their own, and would throw themselves with inspired enthusiasm into the great constructive task affecting all of them. Yet they would retain their specific Jewish qualities : quick intelligence, love of education, learning, and philosophy, and their intense Jewish social and communal conscience. And, out of the new freedom and the old traditions, a great Jewish renaissance would spring up in Palestine : the Jews would be like any other people, yet unique in their Jewish culture.

It was a great conception, an idealized dream in answer to Jewish degradation and decay in the Diaspora. In his fight for this dream Berl Katznelson would brook no obstacle. He rejected Borohov's materialist conception of the struggle for world revolution to be carried by Jewish workers to Palestine. This was unnecessary dogma brought from a foreign past. In the Jewish State class

issues would somehow be solved. But the need for this Jewish State was an absolute starting-point. In the Diaspora he fought violently against the idea of Jewish assimilation, even in democratic France or Communist Russia. Jewish culture represented a specific value in itself to be saved. This was the answer to anti-Semitism. Nothing must stand in the way. Against the strong opposition by spiritual Jewish socialists he supported the British Jewish Legion of 1917, joining one imperialist camp against the other, because it was to the advantage of the Jews. In Palestine and within Zionism he has steadfastly fought the Jewish capitalists and their capitalist methods and outlook—and at the same time kept the balance. The Jewish workers needed Jewish capitalists; without the latter's capital the Histadrut, that ideal union of Jewish workers, could not exist. But they must not be allowed to exploit the Jewish workers, nor to stultify Zionism by employing cheap Arab labour instead of their fellow-Jews. And in any case the small Jewish capitalists were an unorganized mob; it was the task of the Histadrut to lead them in a Zionist direction. By every means at his disposal Katznelson has continuously fought the capitalist Zionists, and endeavoured to strengthen the Histadrut. But on the other side, he equally fought against those ideologies of revolutionary socialism or militant class struggle which, in his view, were only remnants of European ideologies which could only split Zionist solidarity in order to lead to a class struggle in a vacuum. Going further, he fought openly against the idea of mixed Jewish-Arab unions, which to him seemed meaningless—before the Jewish State had been established. If Zionism had any meaning, it was the regeneration of the Jewish people through its toil and working class life. He was unyielding on this point. Jews must have absolute priority of employment in Jewish Palestine. Where, except by Jews, could the Jewish workers frantically knocking at the gates of Palestine be employed? What socialism was it that would sacrifice their interests? Why, he exclaimed, should it just be the

Jewish workers, denied economic equality everywhere in the world, who should be so fatally concerned about the Arab workers in Palestine, to the exclusion of their own persecuted brethren in Poland and Yemen and Austria? Zionism aimed at no mixed Levantine State! The Jews had experienced the pleasures of mixed organization sufficiently in Poland, Germany, Roumania. . . . Palestine was different, not for a moment to be considered on the same terms as other countries. Yes, but there was the inescapable fact that even if Zionist immigration assumed much larger proportions, Palestine was already an inhabited country. Could this contradiction be overcome? For men like Katznelson the Jewish catastrophe and the tragic need for Zionism dominated over all doubts. The rise of the Jewish Palestine, based on a firmly rooted Jewish working class, was the answer to world-wide Jewish persecution. Somehow the Jewish State dominated by Jewish workers would come to full agreement with the Arabs. But this was for the future; at the moment, Arab weakness and the wide psychological gap between the Arabs and European Jews made it easy, almost natural and obvious, to ignore them.

This mood was expressed in *Davar*, the Histadrut daily newspaper which Katznelson edited. It was a pronouncedly socialist newspaper, standing up unfailingly for the rights of the Jewish workers in Palestine; it brought pages of international socialist news, written in a socialist spirit, every day. But at the same time it is passionately nationalist. Few editorial leading articles on any foreign, that is, non-Jewish issue, have been printed in its pages. Jewish-Arab relations have not been given much prominence. Palestine is presented as the solution of the entire Jewish problem; anti-semitic attacks in the Diaspora, and alas, there are enough of them, are strongly featured, and assimilation is denounced as a vain hope. This last, particularly for the sake of the Jewish youth. Why should this youth, in its precarious position in Palestine, begin with useless internationalism? Only once the Jewish

nationalist spirit had become firmly rooted in Palestine should the Jewish youth turn to internationalism. The duality is maintained throughout. For a while the tone of *Davar* was triumphant. But during the last two years, as Zionist hopes have been dealt blow after blow, the voice of Berl Katznelson, expressed in *Davar*, has become bitter and disappointed. The Jewish labour movement, like the rest of Jewish Palestine, has become completely dominated by the desperate day-to-day struggle which leaves no time for reflection; by the frantic efforts at self-defence, at patching the economic system, keeping people alive and working. There has been little sign of any longer political view. Berl Katznelson is to-day an embittered and disappointed man.

And yet, the visionary impulse of the early labour Zionists has had amazing results. Outside France, only two free bodies of organized workers remain to-day in the Mediterranean; those of Spain, fighting for their lives, and that strange body of 100,000 organized Jewish workers in Palestine, with their magnificent organization, their collectives and co-operatives and labour councils, still standing firm even in a Palestine tragically overwhelmed by racial war and confusion: for all its shortcomings, representing a great achievement. Yet it is obvious that in a mixed Palestine the racial structure of the Histadrut is untenable. The future policy of the Jewish workers in Palestine will have to change—however tragic and difficult this change may be.

## CHAPTER XX

### BRAVE NEW WORLDS

FROM the social point of view the whole Zionist movement, Jewish Palestine, and the Histadrut are unusual enough. But the most interesting part of the whole movement is the group of Jewish communes, forming a nucleus to the Histadrut, where more than 15,000 Jews, mostly young men and women, live a primitive communist life.

There are some hundred and sixty of these groups, ranging from firmly established communal villages with populations approaching a thousand down to groups of a few dozen youngsters sharing a joint kitchen and dormitory.

Membership of the Palestine communes is entirely voluntary. The only compulsion is that pressing upon untrained immigrants, who find it easier to acquire skill and settle down within a group than on their own in the towns.

This was how the communes had started. Group settlement was the best method by which inexperienced newcomers could be settled in a difficult country at relatively small cost. Where individual settlers would have gone under, the group could survive. Co-operative life in a communal farm satisfied the social ideal of young Jewish settlers. What is remarkable, though, is that these early communal groups should have endured, some of them for nearly thirty years, into a time when Palestine had become a lively capitalist country. And even more, that the commune movement should have increased in scope and numbers.

G. D. H. Cole, discussing a proposal<sup>1</sup> to settle unemployed

<sup>1</sup> *The People's Front*, 1937, p. 222.



from the British depressed areas in collective 'subsistence groups' or smallholders' groups on the land, dismisses it as retrograde and useless. Such co-operative smallholders, he says, could only succeed (*a*) if endowed with an exceptional degree of skill and industry, (*b*) if able to sell perishable produce to a prosperous, nearby urban market not yet fully supplied, (*c*) if sufficiently backed by the State or strong co-operative societies to make headway against capitalist competition, and none of these conditions could be fulfilled. But they applied in Palestine. The young Jewish workers in the collective groups were highly selected human material; a strong political and financial institution, the Zionist Organization, saw them through initial difficulties and vicissitudes; most important, a new urban market for agricultural produce, not supplied yet, grew up at their very doors.

In these exceptional circumstances there was room for the communes as economic units. Once this opportunity was given, the nationalist ardour of the young settlers did the rest. The communes, and commune life, came to represent the ideal of Palestine Jewish life.

To-day the communes are dotted throughout Palestine. Some have nearly a thousand inhabitants, though one to two hundred is a more usual number; some are grouped in federations, some independent. But they are essentially alike in social structure; to know one is to know them all.

The Commune Mishmar Haemek, with which the writer became most closely acquainted, is one of the show-places of Jewish Palestine. Lying fifteen miles from Haifa, the commune is romantically situated on the foothills of Ephraim, overlooking the wide Valley of Jezreel with its Jewish settlements and facing Nazareth on the hills opposite, with the peak of Mount Hermon, snow-capped most of the year, faintly visible upon the horizon.

Mishmar Haemek has some 120 men and women members, the majority in the middle thirties. Originally most of them came from Poland to Palestine in 1921, leaving comfortable homes and prospects of careers behind

them. For six hard, sometimes desperately hard years they worked in hired labour groups all over Palestine. In 1928 the group was settled and provided with farming equipment by the Zionist Organization on the 5,000 dunam of its present land. Like the rest of the Valley of Jezreel, it was stony and marshy ground. To-day it has changed out of recognition. In the plain below the settlement 3,000 dunam are covered with rich, beautiful fields of wheat, barley, and corn, cultivated with every modern mechanized device, tractors, combines, bale compressors, machine ploughs. Mishmar Haemek had just enough water for some 150 dunam of intensive irrigated land nearer the settlement, on which are planted 40 dunam of fodder, 40 dunam of vegetables (worked mainly by women), 40 dunam of a young grape-fruit grove.

Climatic and soil condition in the locality, due to a chance confluence of cool sea winds, makes Mishmar Haemek a specially favoured spot for dry farming and fruit-growing. On the hill slopes above the settlement an orchard of 100 dunam contains a large variety of plum, peach, apricot, apple and other fruit trees grown partly for ordinary marketing and partly for research to discover the deciduous fruit trees most suitable to Palestine. Jewish settlers who have studied in France, Italy, California, are growing fruit with familiar world names, Satsuma, Formosa Burbank, Ogden, Santa Rosa, continuously grafting, regrafting, watching, noting, and tabulating results, and in some cases have succeeded in producing magnificent large and juicy fruit. Next to the orchard is a vineyard of 100 dunam which, in 1936, when the Arab riots created a closed Jewish market, brought in a profit of fifteen hundred pounds. The settlement also has its dairy and poultry farm. On the mountain slope 700 of the 1,000 dunam owned by the Jewish National Fund have been afforested mostly with pine, of which one-tenth has already been burnt down by the Arabs during the last two years. But the bulk of the trees have grown well. In addition to its tractors and combines, the commune owns a considerable amount of machinery and

rationalized labour-saving appliances. It has an electric laundry and bakery ; workshops for producing small tools and building materials ; a carpentry producing most local furniture ; it has its own bus and lorries to transport members and produce to Haifa—in fact, everything is directed to achieve the maximum of economic autonomy.

Dwellings and other buildings are grouped according to a plan taking account both of convenience and of defence. Store-rooms, sheds, and outhouses form an outer ring, then come dwelling-houses, in the centre the larger buildings, the children's house, the dining-hall, library, and recreation rooms, and so on.

With children, parents, and training groups the population of Mishmar Haemek amounts to some two hundred persons. The whole settlement is a compact unit, spiritually as much as physically. It is surrounded by a tall, strong barbed-wire fence. Late in the evening the gates are shut ; the commune becomes a small world to itself, self-contained, living its own life, cut off from the outside world.

To-day such settled communes are found throughout Jewish Palestine, some on the outskirts of towns, some forming a frontier guard, but all, like Mishmar Haemek, characterized by intense national belief and the same striving towards scientific agriculture and a strange, self-contained better life.

How is such a commune run ? Any assembly of two hundred people, of course, has its small handful of natural leaders. The actual social organization is democratically based on a structure of interlocking committees appointed by the general assembly to deal with each special aspect of the financial, agricultural, social, and administrative side of commune life, and almost every full member is at any time serving on one or more of these committees. But fundamentally the basis of the commune is not democracy, but unanimity. And this is the key to the secret of commune life. Unanimity, making group discipline possible, was older than the commune, was in fact its *raison d'être*. Unanimity of belief in Zionism, in labour

Zionism, the vital importance of agriculture, and in the commune as ideal of social life, first brought the members together. And, in the course of the years, all who had disagreed with this belief, and all who had put their personal aims first, had dropped out of the group. Those who remained were a group of men and women for whom no wavering was possible. In every single Palestine commune this unanimous inspiration and discipline has been the driving-force behind its achievements. And because the members of the commune are on the whole young people, and Jews, it has been a very conscious driving force. For the members of the commune, their life from morning to evening, whether at work, study, or rest, is life for an idea. One would not say that the smallest task or the largest, the education of a child or the cleaning of a floor or milking of a cow, is consciously performed for the National Home, but this consciousness is somehow woven into the general pattern of commune life, fitted naturally into the general effort of construction in Palestine, and it is only as expression of this unanimous urge and discipline that the communes can be properly understood.

Labour Zionism had come first. Other motives such as equality, the socialist trend, although they have fundamentally influenced commune life, are only side products.

All property in the commune belongs to the whole group in common, apart from a few things like clothes, books, a little furniture, little personal conveniences and belongings which members have brought with them or made for themselves. Mishmar Haemek is a relatively wealthy commune, and most members have managed to obtain such small luxuries as a few pretty clothes for the women, pleasant furniture, pictures, or cameras and gramophone records for members with special hobbies. Similarly, through the help of outside relatives, most members have been given the chance of rest and holiday in Europe at least once every four or five years. But in this Mishmar Haemek is to-day probably exceptional. Most communes are considerably poorer. And, in any case, these small luxuries,

personal belongings, and holidays are only a side-line. Fundamentally everything is owned in common.

When building plans are complete every married couple and bachelor member will have one large secluded living-room with its private balcony, facing the wind direction. At the moment many members are still sharing rooms or living in huts. But most of the rooms already constructed are simply furnished, and look cool and inviting.

But in general the members do not spend much time in their own rooms. Meals, work, recreation, care and education of the children, all take place in the larger communal premises specially designed for these purposes.

The work and life of the commune down to smallest details are rigidly regulated by the members themselves, or at least by the older and more experienced members, organized in a network of committees. Each committee is appointed—elected would not be the right word—by the whole assembly of the commune, and is responsible to it. The work organization committee runs the commune as a productive unit, distributing funds, workers, and machinery over dairy farming, orchards and plantations, wheat and corn fields, poultry and vegetables. Each branch of the work, again, has its own committee. Parallel and interlocking with the working committee are the treasury and a secretariat; committees responsible for building, infant welfare and children's education, members' health and hygiene, for the social and human problems naturally incessantly arising when two hundred people live in such continuous close contact. In the case of Mishmar Haemek, a very political commune, a special committee of two or three members was continuously busy with the political activities of the commune which ranged from the commune's own theoretical political discussions to sporadic efforts to get into touch with neighbouring Arabs and rather more enthusiastic efforts to remain in contact with European socialist leaders.

At first this committee system worked amateurishly enough. But in the last fifteen years skilled specialists have

been trained and the utmost advantages drawn from the pooling of brains. To-day, on all the committees, there are young Jews who could rank anywhere as experts. In the large machine-worked fields, in the experimental and scientifically studied orchards, the labour-saving electric laundry and kitchen, as well as in the school run by young teachers in continuous touch with the latest educational systems of America or Austria or Russia, one is aware of an incessant endeavour to improve, to bring everything up to the highest level a group of intelligent people can achieve, by reading, experiment, and ceaseless discussion.

Actually, the separate committees only decide points of detail or routine work. Most members sit on several committees ; as far as practicable membership is changed in turn to maintain the live cohesion of the commune. Each major question must be referred to the full commune assembly which, in the case of an exceptionally intellectual commune like Mishmar Haemek, may meet four or five or even six or seven evenings a week. Questions cannot be decided by votes or majorities, but only by ultimate agreement. This means that certain questions may be endlessly discussed, indeed each commune probably has some questions ; mainly political, left undecided for years. As a rule those in a marked minority must submit, and in fact this usually happens. On main points, beyond the commune assembly, stands the council of the whole network of similar communes, behind the latter, again, the Histadrut and the Zionist Organization.

The interesting point is how the social-economic standard of life in the commune compares with that of the single workers' families in the towns. There can be only one answer. The capable young woman secretary of the commune told the writer that the advantages of an agricultural commune over the harassed and uncertain life of the town workers are so striking that it is strange they should ever have been questioned. The commune starts with certain advantages. On Jewish National Fund land it lives practically rent free. Repayment to the Jewish

Agency for cost of equipment is arranged on exceptionally easy terms. Beyond this the commune is not rich. According to the 1957 budget available expenditure, in money terms, amounted to almost exactly £100 per year per family, or about £8 a month for every two adults and one child in the commune.

Eight pounds is a small sum, but the Palestine communes show how wastefully capitalist life is arranged, and how much collective effort can improve living amenities. Where else can so much be obtained for so little money? Each working couple in the commune has only one room, but this room is airy and bright and clean and has its balcony, and because the workers eat and wash elsewhere, because their children are housed elsewhere, under good conditions, they can make it a real living-room, a refuge for their personal life; none of the worst evils of overcrowding, of harassed workers' families living and eating and raising children all in the same room, exist in a commune.

How many books, said the secretary, can a town worker buy for himself, how often can he enjoy good music? The communal library has thousands of volumes. The music room in the commune has a first-rate gramophone and many hundreds of records. In the lives of even the most intelligent people in towns, disproportionate sums must be spent on show, on unnecessary adornments, merely because such are the standards demanded. Life in a commune is more earnest. Only a minimum is spent on clothes, furniture, and amusements. But, as against that, money has been found to enable members to acquire specialist training, even where this involves study abroad. The best medical services are available. In the case of one member who developed tuberculosis, the commune could pay for a successful five years of cure in Switzerland. And, greatest achievement of all, the individual is free from the incessant financial worries dominating the lives of workers and even middle class families in the towns. There are no landlords in the commune; instead reasonable security of work and life, which the group can give the

individual, freeing him for the actual special work with which he is concerned.

Women and children derive the greatest benefits from commune life. The town worker's or smallholder's wife spends her days in the primitive slavery of looking after house, kitchen, and children all the time. In the commune expert teachers and nurses are available. Parents are not thrown into discomfort by children, nor children disturbed by adults.

In every commune the children are the first to live in a well-built stone house. As soon as the commune can afford it an infants' house of glass and sun terraces is constructed in accordance with the latest hygienic principles. The best food is given to the children. Even in poor communes where the adult workers may be receiving insufficient food, milk for the children is provided. Joint effort enables the members to give the children the best nurses, the best medical service, the best teaching available.

The children lead a good life, living, working, playing together as a group, free from economic inequalities, in close contact with the realities of life.

The secretary said : How many working women in the towns can afford to have trained nurses for their children? Here at Mishmar Haemek for every two and a quarter children there is one trained woman working for them. And, moreover, I can know that the woman caring for my child is not a stranger who may turn out better or worse, but a fellow member of the commune whose ability I know exactly and whom I can trust perfectly to look after my child as if it were her own. How many working mothers in the towns are in such a privileged situation ?

There is only one curious negation of this argument. Most of the members of Mishmar Haemek are already in the middle thirties, yet there are only sixty-five children in the commune, or on the average one child per family. Even in the towns a working couple with only a single child can usually manage satisfactorily. The childlessness of the communes is a very curious thing. Not one of the

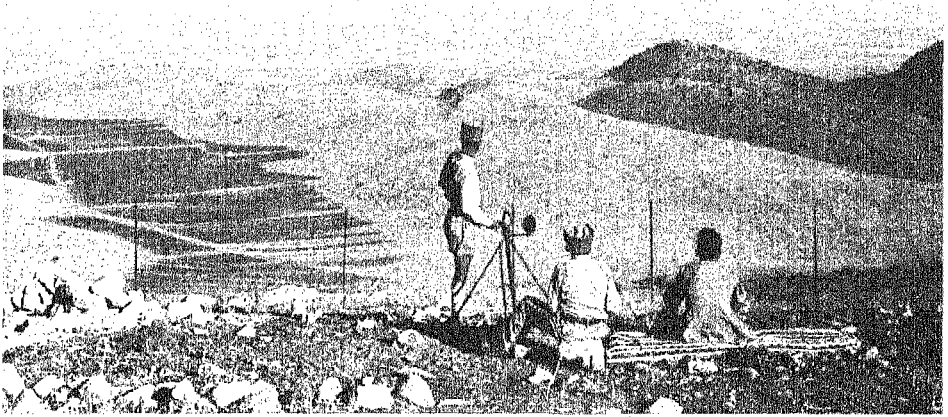


many communes, not even the oldest established, averages more than a child and a half to each family. The birth-rate in the communes is not only much lower than usual amongst country workers, it is among the lowest in the world. This fact has been explained in a number of ways. Many women members have their own responsible work, difficult to interrupt ; few children and the very highest standards for them are preferred to more children and a lesser standard, or else, the strenuous physical work and intellectual atmosphere are so exhausting that the members are weary ; there is relatively little room for eroticism. But none of these reasons is entirely convincing. In fact, these intellectual middle class Jews turned peasants have as few children in their communal village in Palestine as they would have had in the Diaspora. In this childlessness, in the writer's opinion, a fundamental doubt, hidden ordinarily by the ceaseless auto-suggestion of Jewish life in Palestine, has expressed itself, the doubt of all thinking, sensitive people in the world to-day, whether it is worth bringing children into the life that seems ahead of them because we are not alone, because we can do nothing as individuals, as communal groups, as nation, to assure ourselves of security. A first child of a young couple fills a certain emotional emptiness. But after that ?

Bringing a child into the world is the utmost test of confidence. The relative childlessness of Mishmar Haemek expresses its fundamental mood.

Ultimately this doubt may be there, but in the ordinary daytime life it is well hidden behind the conscious awareness of Jewish and Zionist aims in Palestine which gives each day of commune life its very special and very characteristic quality, emotion, and colour.

At five o'clock on a warm summer morning the sleeping commune is roused by a loud, penetrating gong, probably rung by one of the armed watchmen who have been standing on guard throughout the night. At once the commune is astir. Young men and women in rough working clothes, still dim-eyed with sleep, drift into the dining-



*Above: Frontier of a "Jewish State"?*

PLATE VI

*Below: Workers at "Tegart's Wall"*

[Facing page 280]





hall for a quick cup of tea and a last glance at the daily work schedule. This is not the dull early morning of peasants. There is not only silence but a certain grim and sustained resolution about this early rising : another day not only of facing the world, but facing it consciously ; facing Palestine ; facing every national and other task the commune has taken upon itself.

All very sure of themselves, needing no instruction, the members scatter silently to their respective work, some to the tractors, others to harness horses and mules, some to the vineyards, the orchards, the buildings in construction, women members to the cow-sheds, the vegetable fields, kitchen, laundry, some to the kindergarten, school, or office. There is the silence of trained and experienced workers about their movements.

But at eight o'clock, when breakfast is served in the crowded dining hall, the silence is magically dispelled. The day has advanced ; the defencelessness of night and early morning has vanished. Along the packed tables loud voices drift through an atmosphere laden with smells of food. Breakfast consists of eggs, olives and tomatoes, bread and butter, and the inevitable glasses of tea which the settlers, coming from Russia or Poland, drink all through the day. There is an air of indifferent untidiness. The wax cloth is covered with crumbs and peel, too ; cutlery is still lacking—all a legacy from earlier poorer days.

After eight o'clock the workers return to the fields for the longest and hottest spell of work. The midday meal is at twelve—another half-hour of crowded eating and talk, talk. For the next hour the commune is heavily asleep. All is silent, except for the sound of slowly moving cattle, the breath of the wind, and the permanent tap, tap of motor pumps at work. At two o'clock the gong awakens the commune again. The afternoon spell of work lasts till half-past five. As a rule a sea breeze now brings some relief in the hot fields.

Towards six the working day is over for the majority, but the second part of the commune day is only beginning. In

the coastal plain it would still be swelteringly hot at this hour. But Mishmar Haemek is fortunate. Its early evenings are cool, with a crystal-clear transparent quality in the air, while the shadows grow and the pastel shades of the Jezreel landscape slowly merge to a single shade of dark grey, and Mount Hermon, remote and isolated, stands like a Japanese sketch against the clear evening sky.

This is the hour of parents and their children. On the central lawn the parents of the settlement, mostly still young themselves, gather to talk and play with their children—gay, clean-limbed, outdoor children, laughing and playing with an entire lack of self-consciousness achieved rarely except in group life.

The relation between parents and children in the commune is a very special one. Life in the commune, with its perpetual tension and discipline and unremitting conscious effort, rests like a heavy weight upon the individual. Children and the intimacy of a small family offer almost the only chance for a man or woman to escape for a while into a gentler world. By compensation, therefore, family relations in the commune, especially the affection of parents and children, are exceptionally warm and tender; a love all the purer because free from so many economic and dominating factors which are destroying capitalist family life.

In the evening hours the members are free to pursue their own occupations. But on any evening at least half the members are busily engaged in committee work; later, between nine and ten, as often as not the gong is rung again for the full assembly, to discuss questions which may range from the building of a new dwelling-house or cow-shed to the attitude of the commune to Zionist politics or socialist world issues.

In fact, there is something slightly crazy about the night at a commune like Mishmar Haemek. In the daytime the members are cheerful tractorists, fruit-growers, building workers, milkmaids, and so on, as remote as one might imagine from Jewish Ghetto types. At night, in the dark-

ness in which Palestine vanishes, there is a queer reversion, or rather, clinging to type. The general assembly is always crowded, with members sitting along packed benches ; every detail, from the greatest to the least, is argued and re-argued in a Jewish style of talk, talk, talk, of endless criticism and exhausting discussion of every point, of flaring emotion and excited fierce partisanship and political ideas, of discussion losing touch with reality, becoming an end in itself—the age-old Jewish spirit of the Diaspora.

It is eleven o'clock, twelve, sometimes even later, before all the members can tear themselves away to go to bed.

During the last two years the day of the commune has never ended. There was always the chance of surprise attack, in which the whole population of the commune might be obliged to rush out and mobilize against fires in the forest. The defence is carried out with more than cool courage—with exaltation. Almost the entire members of the communes, women as much as men, have been trained to arms ; it is said that in the last resort sufficient of these arms will probably be found. It is a prepared defence ; in the case of real attack, all men, women, and children know their positions. The commune knows little fear, and indeed a strategically constructed settlement like this, defended by expert marksmen, has little difficulty in repelling wild attacks. During one night the writer spent at Mishmar Haemek, as part of regular drill, a manoeuvre of attack from every side was carried out. Within so and so many seconds, and so and so many minutes, every light had been extinguished, every man and woman was at the prepared post, and the attack was judged to have been beaten off without much difficulty.

But through such night manoeuvres and the regular night watching, a great many of these young Jews live with very little sleep. And at five in the morning the gong awakens the commune again to yet another day, and again a hot sun is already beating down from the sky. And it is like this throughout the year, throughout the changing seasons of summer and winter. Only in winter the gong is rung an

hour and a half later, and the hill-sides are often swathed in mists, and there are fierce downpours, and mostly the buildings are like islands in a sea of mud through which men and women struggle in tall Russian boots, waiting for a return of the sun.

But the high point of the day is the calm hour of evening twilight, spent by the parents together with their children, heirs to the new Jewish Palestine in construction. It is pleasant to sit on the lawn of Mishmar Haemek, in the cool air, amidst soft voices and children's laughter. Sometimes one might almost think that the members of the commune have everything in life : creative work and the spiritual peace of achievement ; friendship, love between husband and wife, and parents and children ; support and sympathy of the group for each individual ; intellectual activity and stimulus, the relaxation of books, music, dancing, and, in many cases, travel ; the exultation of danger and self-defence, and, above all, of life consciously lived for an idea.

What more can an intelligent man or woman demand ?

Well, a perpetual group life is not easy. It demands unusual self-restraint and subordination. Because of this many personally ambitious members have torn themselves away to return to the chaotic struggle of the outside world. And it is a hard life, necessarily full of narrow spiritual, emotional, and sexual restraints. Many of the weaker members have found it too much, and have dropped out. And it is no accident that here and there, in every commune, one or two members have quietly killed themselves, unexpectedly, on some fine morning, escaping from nervous strain and perpetual consciousness they could bear no longer.

Yet there can be no denying that for the majority it is a good life, and that Mishmar Haemek, like the fifty, sixty other Jewish communes of its type in Palestine, is an example of how much a group of intelligent young people with a powerful movement at their back can do in the way of achieving a better collective life for themselves.

And there it ends.

It is better to sit on the lawn at Mishmar Haemek in the evening than to stand three-quarters of an hour in a packed subway, returning from a day of nervous mechanical work to the tired atmosphere of a standardized home ; better than to be a worker in perpetually insecure employment, perpetually overcrowded life.

Only the two have nothing to do with each other.

Are the Palestine communes, national purpose apart, mainly islands of escapism ? For most members in a more intellectual group like Mishmar Haemek, this is not enough. They did not come to Palestine to become members of subsidized escapist colonies. The intense discipline, the weary negotiations and restraints required to uphold group life, only have meaning in relation to the idea behind them. And where does this lead to ? Outside, there is the chaotic capitalist world of Jewish Palestine, at present in need of the communes, yet intrinsically hostile to them. How can this hostility be coped with ? There is the haunting question of the children. Their life is a strange one, confined to the borders of the commune. Are they possibly over-trained ? The woman secretary of Mishmar Haemek said with pride that the children could already arrange their day like clockwork. But the world which must eventually be faced will not be like clockwork, and these children who had every difficulty so carefully removed from their path will be at a terrible disadvantage against the rougher, nimbler, far more numerous youth of the towns. The children in some of the older communes already bear this out.

But there are dangers even nearer. The members of Mishmar Haemek are no longer the poorest in the land. To-day they are equipped, subsidized, settled. Mishmar Haemek has thousands of trees to-day. The neighbouring Arab village, poorest of the poor, has one solitary tree. How can the members of the commune square this with their social ideal ? Can they help their Arab neighbours ? No—they know well enough that they desire the Jewish National Fund to purchase this land for further Jewish settlement. How can this be squared ? The passionate



political arguments in which the assembled members are almost nightly involved explain a great deal. Under cover of night refuge from the grim reality of Palestine is found in an intellectual 'Eretz Israel.' Palestine, for these young men and women, is still a place where eventually eight or ten or twelve million Jews will be settled together ; yes, Palestine and—vaguely—the neighbouring countries. In this vast plan the communes are socialist islands, preserving and preparing for the socialism to come. Within that vast plan, and only within it, petty local problems like the relations with their Arab neighbours, can be solved. The argument comes easily : of course, as Jewish immigration progresses sufficiently, the educated Jewish workers must organize the Arabs. But one cannot start with ignorant fellahs, hopelessly without class-consciousness. No, the start must be made with the new educated Arab workers in the towns, who will not let their reactionary nationalist leaders sway them from their class interests as class-conscious workers in the great Jewish State in which they, too, can have their part. But all these problems can only be solved within this wider process of vast Jewish colonization ; nothing must be done which might possibly obstruct this building of Eretz Israel. The argument becomes tortuous and opportunist in a slightly crazy way. The British Mandate is at present an aid to Jewish colonization ; the Mandate must therefore be maintained in the interests of Jewish and Arab masses alike. The members of the commune are therefore opposed to all schemes for the partition of Palestine, to them a similar illusion. An elaborate technique of evasion has been developed. At a discussion where the writer was present a non-political member said : "When an ordinary man, neither a Jew nor an Arab, reads that Jews and Arabs are continuously fighting for Palestine, wouldn't he also think it the fairest way to divide the country ?" And at once the answer came back, given by the political leader of the commune, a young man of pronounced Slav features in which not a touch of Jewishness could be discovered, and who could

have come straight out of an early Soviet film: "Division of Palestine? It is only an imperialist trick to destroy Zionism. Ask the least educated Arab sheikh, and he will laugh at the idea that the British had offered a people of seventeen millions 2,000 square miles as a territory in which to settle!" Of course, for seventeen million people, 2,000 square miles are nothing. But what has this to do with the position and conflict within the narrow frontiers of Palestine?

Psychologically, these political visions with which these young Jews first came to Palestine as exalted adolescents, and to which they have clung since in spite of everything, are necessary: the vision of the Jewish Socialist State in which Jewish and Arab proletarians will live in peace and freedom, is necessary to hide the reality of the dirty Arab hovels and their wretched inhabitants, only a few hundred yards beyond Mishmar Haemek's barbed-wire fence.

In the last two years the grim realities of Palestine have impressed themselves with a vengeance upon the commune. The Arabs have risen; Arab attacks have varied from continuous to sporadic. Half a dozen settlers have been killed in Mishmar Haemek and neighbouring settlements. Work in remote fields can only be carried on under strong guard. True, there is little chance of successful direct assault. But the economic depression resulting from perpetual insecurity has become far more dangerous. There has been a catastrophic shrinkage in the urban market for agricultural produce, and the standard of living in the communes has fallen correspondingly, even more because they had to absorb a number of unemployed from the towns. In the poorer communes all the devices of social organization and joint living have now to be directed, not to maintaining a high standard but a sheer minimum of food and shelter for the members. With so many members occupied in guard duties, work for the remainder has become correspondingly harder, one weary round of drudgery. Overcrowding has set in, there is little food. And yet in Jewish Palestine the social factors which brought

the communes into existence are still active, and the communes still stand firm, at one and the same time Jewish frontier posts and splendid examples of collective agriculture and collective living, placed in the midst of the tumults of Palestine. What can be their future, whether in a miniature Jewish State with new class conflicts or in a mixed Jewish-Arab Palestine under British colonial rule? It is difficult to say, except that the impulse behind them is still so strong that they will endure and play their part for a long time to come.

## CHAPTER XXI

### TEL AVIV

THE three cities of Palestine—Jerusalem, city of the past ; Haifa, city of the future ; Tel Aviv, city of the present—are strikingly different from each other. Jerusalem, 3,000 feet up on its stony mountain, is picturesque yet meaningless and sprawling, a city of tourists and hotels, sham religious antiques, divided communities, suburbs without a centre, spiritually a dead city without life of its own. Haifa, built on an ambitious scale, is beautifully situated, ready to become an industrial centre ; the atmosphere of an international Mediterranean port is already making itself felt. But to-day Tel Aviv is the largest and liveliest city in Palestine. Besides, it is unique as the only all-Jewish city in the world.

After all these years—one has to get this in proportion—after Jewish urban civilization in Babylon, Cordova, Frankfurt, and Vienna, after the million Jews in ancient Alexandria, half a million in imperial Rome, two million in modern New York, half a million in Chicago—now Tel Aviv, with its 160,000 inhabitants, but its unique distinction of being all-Jewish.

It is a city built on sand, almost abstractly. It is the most purely middle class city imaginable. The Jewish social range is narrower than that of any other people. Generation after generation there has been no Jewish peasantry, no landed aristocracy born to hereditary privilege, no military or official caste, and at the other end few rough manual labourers, no brutish, illiterate, submerged tenth. The whole Jewish people was essentially an educated, mobile, middle class community, whose æsthetic

sense had been pathologically stifled and social sense pathologically developed through Ghetto life.

Tel Aviv is the product of this history. Built by German architects, with its monotonous rows of modern cubicle houses glittering against the blue Mediterranean sky, it has a curious classless uniformity possessed by no other city in the world. Particularly in 1933-6, when, most true to its essential character, it was as fluid as the Jews, no part of it had special characteristics. New sections sprang up, older ones were transformed. Almost overnight ultra-modern bright shops, cinemas, restaurants, lights appeared, like a frantic display of window-dressing, while other streets only a few years old were already crumbling and derelict, reaching the stage when rebuilding was necessary. At the same time there were—and are—practically no public buildings of distinction, no centre to the city, most striking of all, not a single park nor any large garden: real estate speculation created and shaped these white, hot streets. But these streets are always crowded, always filled with Jews hurrying through the hot sunshine, with immigrants struggling to find a home and make a living. Probably no street crowd is as mobile, as energetic, as bent on living almost entirely in public, as the Jews. Jewish fluidity and cosmopolitan stylelessness has a uniformity which is psychological rather than external. The Jewish solidarity of haphazard immigrant masses, intensified by nationalism and a haunting sense of common fate, dominates the city. To an exceptional degree life is lived in public. There is an extraordinary profusion of public, social, and cultural life: speeches, lectures, theatres, newspapers—without end. The day of Tel Aviv has no end, merging into a night in which the streets are brightly lit, filled with the same vital, hurrying crowd.

But these streets, like the houses, are of concrete; they give no repose. And Tel Aviv is like a besieged city. Within a mile of the centre of their cosmopolitan city it is even now not safe for Jews to walk after dark.

Partly it is unsafe because the Jews themselves, even

where strong and armed, as in Palestine, are inordinately law-abiding—product of a long Jewish history of pacifism. Tel Aviv's insecurity is the clearest proof of this.

Take the situation. Well over 200,000 Jews live within fifteen miles of the centre of Tel Aviv, outnumbering the Arabs in this district by three to one. South of Tel Aviv lies Jaffa, north and west some few Arab villages hemmed in between the city and the chain of Jewish colonies, and yet the Jews have passively permitted a state of affairs to grow up in which it is unsafe for them ever to venture beyond their own fences. Where else in the world could a city of such size be intimidated by such a weak enemy as a few thousand Arabs? This has nothing to do with physical courage. Jews can show an exalted bravery and, whenever attacked in Palestine, defend themselves with utmost bravery. Yet they seem to lack the initiative for attack. To go out to these neighbouring Arab villages from which Jews have been shot at and killed, to retaliate swiftly, harshly, in kind, assuring the Arabs that there can be no attack with impunity—that, which would have been perfectly natural in any other city, seemed to be beyond the Tel Aviv Jews. Political calculation played its part, but it is by no means a complete explanation. No, the main cause of this inaction was the century-old remoteness from war, bloodshed, brutality; an orderly, 'civilized' characteristic not easily overcome.

Other specifically Jewish characteristics are equally marked in Tel Aviv.

The Jews as a people are musical to the *n*th degree. In the white mass of houses of Tel Aviv how many children are there hammering on the keys, learning to play the piano . . . how many future musicians amongst them? That Bronislaw Huberman, a great violinist and great artist, should have been able to fashion the first-rate Palestine Symphony Orchestra out of the many first-rate Jewish musicians expelled from Central Europe, is perhaps not surprising. But that this orchestra should, in Jewish Palestine, particularly in Tel Aviv, have found an

enthusiastic, musical, ardent audience, that contact between orchestra and audience should have been established after one concert—that is remarkable. To see Bronislaw Huberman give a special workers' concert in Tel Aviv's largest building to an audience of 3,000 workers, eager young Jews and Jewesses in rough working clothes . . . listening in deadly silence, hanging on every note, was for the writer a strange and impressive experience.

The Jewish musicians of the world have responded to this call, and already turned Tel Aviv into an extraordinary musical centre on the Mediterranean. Most of the great Jewish instrumentalists have come to give concerts: Heifetz, Elman, Czigei, Schnabel, an Aryan German artist like Adolph Busch to show his solidarity.

Toscanini himself came from New York to conduct the Palestine Symphony Orchestra. Political sentiment may have prompted the first visit; the genuine musical understanding of Jewish Palestine assured its repetition. There came Malcolm Sargent, from England; Dobrowen, a brilliant Russian-Jewish conductor, from Budapest, to conduct symphonies by Mendelssohn or Shostakovitz, the young Soviet composer fallen into disfavour, both composers now in disgrace in their native lands—but given eager hearing in Tel Aviv.

There also came one of the sincerest musicians of all, Eugene Szenkar, a Jewish conductor who gave three concerts in the early part of 1937. Szenkar's fate has been strikingly characteristic of that of so many talented European Jews. He was born in Hungary. Already in his twenties, he had made his reputation in Germany. At the early age of thirty-two he was appointed Musical Director of the Grosse Volksooper in Berlin. A year later, exiled as a Jew, he fled to Moscow, where, under the Soviets, he seemed to find refuge. In 1934 he was appointed Chief Director of the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra. Again he gained a great reputation. But the psychological rot started by Hitler did not stop at frontiers. In 1937 the Stalin-Yeshov purge struck at musical Moscow as at

every aspect of life. Members of orchestras vanished. Some of the chief figures in Russian music were shot without trial. Szenkar, as a foreign subject, was given forty-eight hours to leave Soviet territory. Now, with the totalitarian countries closed to him, he can conduct in 'democratic' Paris, London, New York—and in Jewish Palestine.

That artists, that musicians hunted by intolerance, should be able to perform unhindered in this new city, in which they can taste a breath of freedom, for a short while at any rate—this almost justifies Tel Aviv.

But Jews, in any case, have a particularly marked tolerance and receptivity. They are, *par excellence*, the cosmopolitan people ; with few class distinctions, in outward life logical and thinking rather than feeling, an agglomeration of individuals rather than a mass. Freedom of speech is more than a principle among Jews. It is a craze. In Palestine it is of two kinds. First—heritage of centuries of Talmudic hair-splitting—in theoretical discussion, everything may be said, every opinion is possible and should be respectfully heard ! Every café in Tel Aviv is a forum for free international discussion and debate. And the second freedom is that of every man to engage in oratory. The all-pervading Zionist atmosphere is partly responsible for the extraordinary number of public speeches made in Tel Aviv, but it is by no means a sufficient explanation.

Endless speeches, endless public discussion, historical product of the unnatural Ghetto life, form one of the strongest Jewish traditions. In fact, public speeches are to the Jew what drink is to the Irish : the emotional colour of life and its consolation. And in the all-Jewish city of Tel Aviv, where every street corner at once represents Zionist achievement and Zionist illusion, the Jewish passion for public oratory has risen to grotesque proportions. Every single day in this tiny world is marked by some public function or gathering—an inauguration, an anniversary, a funeral, or a memorial ! Jewish demand for oratory seems inexhaustible ; at each gathering crowds assemble to



listen not to one speaker or perhaps two, according to European custom, but often to stand in the burning heat for hours, listening to six, eight, ten, or more Jewish speakers who, one by one, step on to the platform passionately haranguing the audience, always long-winded, repetitious, disregardful of what others might have said. A good many of the speeches are delivered by an inner group whom the older residents of Tel Aviv must have heard on countless occasions. Most of the speeches are of a crude, humourless sentimentality, which would never be suffered in Europe. There is a curious touch of auto-suggestion about the speeches delivered in the hot sun of Tel Aviv. Most of them are not much more than excited affirmations of Zionist faith, a kind of continuous intoxication, a whipping-up of hopes. But the actual speech, the fine words hurled into the glaring Palestine sun, are not enough. On the following morning verbatim accounts of all important speeches are printed in the entire Hebrew Press. After an important event, such as a Parliamentary Palestine debate or a Zionist Congress, newspaper columns are for weeks filled with word-for-word accounts of the entire series of speeches, reproduced to the least detail. So-and-so said in his speech . . . and So-and-so . . .

The flood of words is, of course, like a queer drug.

The political life of the Palestine Jews shows this same exaggeration. It is political life gone slightly crazy, with a kind of despair about it, as though the Jewish community, emerged from their Ghetto into the alien glare of Palestine, found it more than they could bear. For the elections to the Municipal Council of Tel Aviv, whose powers are severely limited by the British rulers of Palestine, twenty-three political parties put up candidates; a wave of electioneering excitement swept the whole city. Even more absurd than that, in the elections to the Jewish Community Council in Jerusalem, a body with only religious and charity functions, and a budget of at most £5,000, sixteen parties appeared, varying from 'Kurdish immigrants' to 'Left opposition Marxists,' posters were

put up, real campaigns set on foot, and the election fought out according to ideological, political principles and grotesquely inappropriate European political opinions and slogans. This is an after-product of Ghetto life, a *reductio ad absurdum* of politics, slightly hysterical, Jewish, overdone. This same slight mass hysteria determines the attitude towards outsiders. Deep-rooted Jewish solidarity, and fear and suspicion of the non-Jews are still powerfully present, even if taking a more natural national colouring among young Palestinians. But, conversely, mass flattery and servility of the Jews can be equally exaggerated, slightly hysterical, differing from Europe. For instance, it had been decided in Tel Aviv to celebrate the British Coronation Day. On the day before, the High Commissioner's announcement had introduced the latest and harshest limitation on Jewish immigrants. But celebrations in Tel Aviv went on undeterred, indeed with a kind of desperation, as though such a show of flags and loyalty, of fireworks and ready festival spirit must surely, surely have its effect.

This queer exaggeration arises partly out of the fact that Jewish life is lived exaggeratedly in common. The emotions of a large mass of people can only be primitive and overdone. And the Jewish population of Tel Aviv, particularly, more than could be the case in a European town, lives as one man. Life centres in the streets, among the hurrying, excited crowds on the pavements. Jews know each other ; emotion as much as news is communicated with fluid ease. And, as with any nervous people, the picture changes quickly. Has there been some fortunate news ? The whole town is excited, optimistic. Has there been a new blow to one's hopes ? Communal gloom hovers over the city. This is the characteristic of the Jews, that in their entirety they form one psychological organism. They know it : a blow struck at one individual is a blow struck at all. War—the guerilla warfare to which it was subject—had the opposite effect upon Tel Aviv from that upon a European town. Instead of the defiant, reckless, often meaningless

gaiety of Europe (the mood which gave birth to jazz during the War), there is not only communal mourning but the duty of such. During the summer of 1936, after a number of Jews had been killed in Palestine, all dancing and music in public places were officially forbidden. Stones were thrown by excited passers-by at the windows of those who gave private parties. How dared they break the community's duty of mourning. . . . Funerals play a great part in the life of Tel Aviv. Here there is a great deal of the Orient. Instead of the frozen stolidity of Europeans when faced with disaster, the Jewish reaction is frequently noisy, violently demonstrative in its grief. As an age-old historical remnant their traditional flamboyant Semitic mourning—night-long shrieks and Oriental ululations by the women of the house—is still heard in Tel Aviv, not only among Orientals but occasionally even among Polish Jews.

But this apart, even among the emancipated Jews, even in the ranks of the Histadrut, there is a peculiar emphasis upon death which strikes the observer. The death of a public figure is a queer *holiday of mourning* for the whole town. Solemn demonstrations of grief are held. Funeral processions make the round of the town, watched by thousands. When one of the sub-editors of *Davar* died suddenly in 1937, *seven* out of the *eight* pages of the next day's issue were filled with hysterical obituary notices and affirmations of grief in thick black letters. Obituary notices by every acquaintance of the deceased appeared for weeks afterwards in the newspaper. This is exaggerated, and Jewish. In general, as the Englishman, for instance, hides his grief, the Jew must demonstrate it.

But if one goes further, very subtly, in Tel Aviv, there is death in the air. Something is gone. Echoes of this can be caught even under the insistence upon the new life, the new freedom, the new generation springing up. What is gone is a world order, that relatively free, democratic phase of history, before the capitalist decline, in which the Jews, too, had been allowed to play a part.

And so one comes not only to the present but to the

probable future of Tel Aviv—the European city in the Middle East.

During these last years, while fear of totalitarianism was throwing Europe into a new armaments race, life in Tel Aviv had possessed many good qualities. In fact, one could feel as if for the last time certain qualities were gathered together in intense form: democratic freedom, liberty of expression, strong social consciousness, ready tolerance, a receptive intellectual outlook, cosmopolitan in the best sense; all in a city linked by a thousand threads to the outside world. But how much of this social and intellectual life can be considered native to Palestine?

In its present form, almost nothing. Walking through Tel Aviv in 1936 and 1937 the writer could not free himself from a sense of the impermanence of it all, as though Tel Aviv was not a city but a hastily put up exhibition of buildings. There was little economic conflict. The city was not so much capitalist as living on its capital. And so, similarly, it was intellectually living on capital imported from abroad. How much is already genuinely rooted, indigenous? So little! Even the Horrah, this dance of ecstatic liberation, is not quite Palestinian, but dates back to Russia and Poland, of 1919–21. The writer was given a far stronger impression of a really Palestinian scene at a football match in Tel Aviv, where a crowd of very young Palestinian Jews, almost wholly Hebrew speaking, ecstatically greeted the success of their side against the visiting Hungarian team. The agile young Palestinian Jewish players, the smoothly sunburnt faces and light clothes, the flags fluttering proudly as symbols of that small-town patriotism which they were . . . a certain sense of the Levant, of the sun on white roofs, trees laden with golden fruit in an adjacent orange grove . . . that is much nearer the picture of Palestine as it is likely to become.

Two forces, in one way opposed to each other, are simultaneously changing and moulding Tel Aviv—nationalism from within, the influences of the East and the Levant from without.

Exposed to attack for two years, it is no wonder that Jewish Palestine, and particularly Tel Aviv, is growing more nationalist. The internationalism of Tel Aviv is already a fading characteristic. There is a subtle but pervading chauvinism about, among all classes and types, among business men facing sudden losses, workers suddenly fighting desperately for their jobs. Chauvinism grows quickly. The Arabs attack ; all Arabs are enemies ; any man dealing with the enemy is a traitor. Jewish Palestine, possessed by a growing and fatalist knowledge that it is in danger, must be fortified ; the leaders of the Histadrut are continuously emphasizing this sentiment. Substitution of Jews for Arab workers in all Jewish orange groves becomes a national duty ; the use of exclusively Jewish products, in place of Arab or imported, likewise. All the usual signs of nationalist narrowing can already be felt. The Palestine Jewish Press is nationalist, whatever its secondary political shade. An exaggerated spirit of militarism, marching in formation, flags and military symbols, is already apparent, supplementary to the official self-defence. Day by day the nationalist drum is beaten, tolerance and clear thought are diminishing. And judged from their own narrow national aims, the nationalists are of course right ; Palestine can be no refuge for internationalism. That these national aims, in their present narrow forms, lead towards their own negation, is another matter. . . .

The second influence is a contrary one, an insidious, ever-progressing assimilation to the Eastern surroundings. Tel Aviv's past is that of Europe ; but in the present it is in the Levant, at one of the focal points of international trade, surrounded by the chaotic Arab world, and these influences have their effect, they are somehow in the air, particularly affecting the youth. One-fifth of Tel Aviv consists of Oriental Jews, mostly immigrants from Yemen, Morocco, Egypt, Baghdad, Kurdistan, Turkey, or Salonica, at present pushed out of sight into huddled shums (to which, as mentioned, no roads are as yet built), quickly

forced down to become the menial and casual workers of Tel Aviv. But at the same time they are part of Tel Aviv, they live in the very heart of the city, their families swarm, they are outbreeding the European Jews. Inevitably an Oriental element—superficially Westernized and polyglot, quick-tempered, chaotic—is growing in the midst of Tel Aviv. Particularly the youth of Tel Aviv is affected.

But, in any case, the young generation growing up in Tel Aviv is very different from its parents. Palestine has at least broken one ancient spell. The young Jewish generation in Palestine is the first which has not been taught to honour its parents and their traditions. And this, for Jews, is a vital change.

The general term in Palestine for the young Palestine-born children is 'Sabre,' or cactus, due, it is said, to their quickly-flaring, Southern temper. To an outside observer the striking thing about the sunburnt 'Sabre' children is that they have not really got a Jewish expression, that a certain indefinable air and the psychological traits which mark out the Jews in the Diaspora countries in spite of local assimilation—that these are lacking. At first sight these Jewish children seem noisy, assertive, demonstrative, but also often careless, graceful, and scatter-brained. They are free from that look of strained eagerness and fundamental want of happiness so characteristic of Jews. Most important of all, unlike Diaspora Jews, they often look happy, contented. A certain weight carried by one Jewish generation after the other has been removed from them.

For the first time, in Palestine, here are Jewish parents not anxious to dominate the children, demand that they honour and obey them, fetter them under the threat of parental anger or the jealous displeasure of a Jewish God. On the contrary, in Palestine the relationship has been exaggeratedly turned into its opposite: the Jewish children in Tel Aviv and the Jewish colonies are incessantly told that while their parents led twisted lives, and the entire Jewish Diaspora past was unhappy and false, they themselves are the salt of the earth and the hopes of the whole

Jewish people. They are almost trained to live a life in which the new Palestinian community of youth, the school, the youthful street life, are everything, the influence of parents and home, nothing. The youthful exuberance to which this has led is so great that even the efforts of the minority of 'black' religious Jews to impose their perverted Diaspora fetichisms upon their children must come to nothing.

This break with tradition has been fundamental. But, in addition, the Palestine Jewish youth is growing up in a country free from the nagging repressions enforced by anti-Semitism, responsible for the defensive and uneasy mentality of the modern Jew. The young Palestinian children do not really know what anti-Semitism is, cannot understand it. Arab hostility, where encountered, is something entirely different, a clear-cut national enmity, like all the others in the modern world.

Moreover, this youth, in spite of the tremendous efforts of the Jewish education system, is growing up in a new country of chaotic change and a Mediterranean country at that. Third, it is growing up in a virtual British colony, where British rule and outlook and the full force of imperialism, represented by British administration, judges and soldiers, cannot but have their effect upon an impressionable colonial youth.

The results of these changes, above all the break with the parents, are quickly apparent. The young native Palestinian Jews in many ways do not seem 'Jewish': they have lost the defensive uneasiness, the physical awkwardness, the intellectual and revolutionary fever of the European Jews, even if undoubtedly they are less intellectual, perhaps even less intelligent.

Partly through the effect of sudden change to hotter climate, a surprisingly marked physical type has emerged. It is easy to pick out children born in Palestine from immigrant children. Palestinian children have well-shaped heads, sometimes blond, but usually light-brown hair, stiff but never frizzy; an opaque skin, often freckled,

wide eyes narrowed by the glare of the sun, full but rather pale and hard lips. They are not very tall (though taller than their parents), but, the young men especially, lightly and athletically built. They have a marked outdoor look and would never be thought Jews when met outside Palestine. They are on the whole a light-hearted, graceful, and attractive youth, rather too assertive, with a rather chaotic outlook upon a chaotic world, already tending to acclimatize to Mediterranean idleness and hot flare of temper. On the whole they have a strong sense of reality ; they have good hands, quick ways of coming to grips with the world around them ; particularly the Jewish farmers' children in the colonies seem born to a sure feeling for the Palestine soil, as though bred to it for generations.

This, the unquestioning realism of the Palestine youth, is very marked. But at the same time there is something not quite natural about this realism, and about the youth itself. These Palestine Jewish children are a colonial youth, some of them even quite rustic, yet a colonial youth unlike any other. They have not been able to escape—how could they have escaped!—from the unnatural Zionist propaganda atmosphere into which, unfortunately for them, they were born. The gestures, the facial expressions, the quick loud laughter and speech of these young boys and girls have something strange about them. They are too loud, too nervous, almost like those of actors : more than life size. And, indeed, these children of Zionist Palestine have been made to feel actors within the continuous blare and shout of Zionist propaganda in Palestine, with all its loud tearfulness, its sentimentalist propaganda, its slightly crazy yet unquestioned assumptions. These children are told that the redemption of the Jewish people lives in them, that Palestine is the solution to the Jewish question, that it is Jewish by right, that only Zionism is the possible Jewish faith. They are told that tremendous responsibilities rest upon them ; the Diaspora they have never seen is looking towards them. They are brought up on endless Zionist processions, Zionist shows, marches, and demonstrations.



The propaganda din is incessant. And so, inevitably, an equally strong reaction has set in.

The youth has a few ideas : Arabs are both neighbours and enemies, more Jewish immigration means more strength, life is insecure and it pays to organize, particularly on military lines. These few crude ideas suffice. Everything else is rejected. To quite a remarkable extent, in fact, the youth has already rejected the hyper-intellectual, cosmopolitan, European aspect of Tel Aviv, and built up its own rising life concentrated, like most colonial life, on jobs, sports, the Tel Aviv beach, American films, and militarism. The reaction has almost something of the instinctive conspiracy of a young generation against the old about it. And as this young generation, ignorant of anti-Semitism and Diaspora Zionism, but feeling itself rooted in Palestine, grows up and dominates Jewish Palestine, the Palestine problem, particularly the Jewish-Arab problem, must radically change and at last become simpler.

Emotionally, at least, if not politically, the young Palestine Jews will be able to do what the European Jews could not do—understand Levantine Arabs, and possibly come to terms with them.

## CHAPTER XXII

### PALESTINE OF THE ARABS

CALIBAN to PROSPERO :

‘ You taught me language : and my profit on’t  
Is, I know how to curse.’

THE mysterious lure of Arabia and the Arabs dies hard. Year by year a number of romantic studies of Arab adventure and Arab contacts continue to be published. Almost all of these are pure folklore, omitting the real significance of Arab history of to-day : that of a weak, impoverished, backward people, only just emerged from subjection, occupying a large strategic area, struggling desperately and with not too much success for emancipation and against outside forces.

Their small numbers, as much as their poverty and their backward illiterate condition, handicap the Arabs to-day. Usually, because of some vague confusion of Arabs with Moslems in general, Arab numbers have been wildly overestimated. Leaving out Egypt, which is Arab-speaking but has its own separate national culture and history, the large block of Arab countries between the Mediterranean and the Persian gulf, an area half as large as Europe, has a thinly spread population of only thirteen millions, of which only about eleven million are Moslem Arabs, the rest Lebanese, Armenians, Jews, and so on. Of course, the comparison of population density with Europe means little because the greater part of the Middle East is pure dry desert. At the existing economic level, or rather, poverty level, many areas in the Middle East, particularly in the Arabian peninsula, can even be considered overpopulated. Yet the fertile areas of Iraq, Syria, Palestine,

and Trans-Jordan, which once supported the great civilizations of the Middle East, are to-day only sparsely populated and hardly developed. The Arabs were the last occupiers of the Middle East ; together with the historic stage they occupied they declined into insignificance.

For centuries after the Arab downfall the Arab social order presented the same unchanging pattern. The population was divided into three rigid castes. Lowest in the scale came the nomads, living a primitive tribal life adjusted to a struggle for existence under conditions of the uttermost poverty and barrenness. At the first impact of modern economic change nomad life quickly degenerated, and except in the desert is fast dying out.

Side by side with the nomads, in the settled points, were the Arab fellaheen, mostly a desperately poor peasant population, illiterate and cowed, toiling with primitive methods under unfavourable conditions, kept down by a permanent load of extortionate debt and the crushing conservatism of their Islamic religion.

The landowning and administrative upper class in the small and isolated towns formed a tiny minority. It was well mixed with non-Arab elements, it lived in the shadow of foreign Turkish rule, it had a veneer of European education, and that superficiality mingled with cruelty known as Levantinism.

All three castes, nomads, fellaheen and Arab townsmen, though sharply separated, yet formed one loose complex of Arab culture and Arab life.

This life was one of standstill, of extreme contrasts in wealth, of fierce exploitation, of naked poverty and filthy degradation side by side with senseless luxury.

It was a life over which idleness and immobility brooded. It was life without constructive effort, without more than flickers of independent thought or creation. Culture was represented by a little over-decorative pictorial art, some attempts at poetry, legal practice and remembrance of the past. The ruling emotion seemed that of hatred,



*Above (left) Christian Arab woman  
(right) Arab Nationalists in Café*

PLATE VII

*Below Arab in the old city of Tiberias*

[Facing page 301]





expressed in bitter litigation, dissension, strife, and violently flaring tribal and family feuds.

It was a dark life, in which the repressions of self-imposed religious beliefs kept human impulse everywhere in check. The men especially kept their women in subjection, treating them as instruments for their pleasure, to be bought and sold as chattels. Among a repressed population homosexuality was the practice rather than the exception.

Probably this unbalanced sex and family life, more than anything, caused the Arab world to be one of general instability, of uncertainty, of sustained effort only in hatred and war. And so the Arabs were immobilized. Conservatism ruled . . . the nomads wandered in the desert . . . the peasantry toiled, blind and brutish . . . in the towns the effendis and merchants sat in idleness; there were occasional beautiful houses and gardens, but beside their gates filth accumulated, walls crumbled, none cared. . . . The Arab youth, imprisoned in this emptiness, tried escape through emotional sensualism; European education could go no more than skin deep.

It was during the first phase of the Arab struggle away from the past that the imperialist impact began to destroy the Arab social order. Modern transport technique snatched the Arab countries into contact with Europe. The westernization of the Arabs is only part of a general process, the westernization of all mankind, into which the remotest nations are being drawn. It is not a pleasant or æsthetic process, but under the rule of finance capitalism it is irresistible. The political independence of the Arabs is in utmost danger. Half-way between Europe and the East, their countries have vital strategical value. The Great War was the first stage of definite European invasion, during which European armies marched through the Middle East from end to end. Motor and aeroplane routes, abolishing distances, are criss-crossing the Arab territories, already coveted for the raw materials and crop values they may possess. Cotton, successfully planted in Egypt and Iraq,

citrus cultivation, so surprisingly successful on the Palestine seaboard, show the first introduction of revolutionary agricultural change. The most important raw material in the Arab countries is oil. The Middle Eastern oilfields are still relatively unexplored, as against those of America, which may soon show signs of exhaustion. Oil to-day is the vital key to military power. The tentacles of the great oil companies are twining themselves tightly round the Middle East. In Persia the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, backed by the British Government, is in control. The Seaboard Oil Company of Delaware, U.S.A., has now joined it as new concessionaire in Afghanistan and Northern Persia. The Iraq Petroleum Company, with its great pipe-line from the Mosul oilfields to Haifa and Tripoli, virtually rules Iraq. In the British Protected Bahrain Island an immensely successful oilfield run by the Standard Oil Company of America produced six million barrels in 1937, and is expanding. The small Arab State of Kuwait has become an Anglo-Iranian preserve. The kingdom of Ibn Saud is being prospected by the Standard Oil Company of California and two British concerns. Various British, French, American, and international companies have obtained or are competing for concessions in Northern Syria (already positive results), in Palestine and Trans-Jordan (resources of Dead Sea and Negeb still unknown). Where an oilfield has been opened towns, roads, railways, strategic junctions develop, and with them finance-imperialist rule over the Middle East. At the same time the Arabs are forcibly changed. Their economic order is transformed; a new administrative middle class springs up; they are turned into a modern colonial people.

From the first, imperialism took every advantage of Arab poverty and weakness and ignorance. And what have the Arabs to set against this weakness? The fact that they were once a great civilized race, and that they could rise to fight, not indeed with great efficiency, but with a passion and bitter hatred which surprised the invaders.

The Middle East has never been turned into a complete

colonial field. Immediately after the War, when strong French and British armies were still in occupation, Arab revolt blazed up in Iraq and Syria with such intensity that at least a nominal measure of Arab independence had to be granted. And in the last twenty years the Arabs have struggled painfully, chaotically, towards a threefold aim : independence, unity, and modernization. Both their struggle and their weakness have been apparent during these years. They have shown intense national patriotism and a fierce readiness for sacrifice. But other nations, with a far lesser cultural past behind them, have shown much greater aptitude for adapting themselves to modern conditions. The dead weight of their tradition still clogs the Arabs. They have nowhere shown much administrative or economic talent. Their national movements have remained fitful and chaotic, their independence, even when gained, of a precarious character.

In 1925 the Syrian Arabs rose in revolt and engaged a large French colonial army for two years. In 1936, taking advantage of the international situation to threaten another war, they at once gained independence and membership of the League of Nations—just before the League ceased to exist. But the small Syrian republic, with its two and a half million poor subjects, immediately had to call in the French army for aid against its own rebellious subjects ; and it only took the threat of invasion by a Turkish army division into Alexandretta to expose the hollowness of Syrian independence.

In the State of Iraq the Arab ruling class of Baghdad, that merchants' and moneylenders' city battenning on the country-side, is largely dependent upon oil royalties from Mosul for the upkeep of its army. With a population of only three million in a country almost as large as Germany, the State of Iraq is quite unable to defend its frontiers against serious attack.

In Arabia Ibn Saud, a modern King David, ruling a vast realm only through the power of his personality, is growing old, his sons are beginning to quarrel . . . there is little



reason to assume that his kingdom is securer than that of Abyssinia.

Everywhere Arab development has been a race against time, against the increased and increasing imperialist penetration which modern technique makes possible—and the Arabs are hardly winning.

The Arab movement in Palestine is part of this general Arab nationalist urge. Before the War the Palestine Arabs were the poorest, least known and least significant of Arab populations. Since then, placed against their will under British government, and subjected, again against their will, to the impact of Zionist colonization, they have been involved in a swifter process of economic revolution and political westernization than anywhere else.

In less than twenty years they have increased their numbers from about 600,000 to over a million. Since 1935 their annual rate of natural increase (about 30 per 1000) was the highest ever recorded in any country. Of the total increase about 50,000 is due to Arab immigration *into* Palestine. Arab citrus plantations in the coastal plain cover an area of 140,000 dunam, representing an investment of seven million pounds. A certain number of Arab industries (though nothing to compare with the Jewish industrial growth) have sprung up. Though the number is still small, proportionately more Palestine Arab children receive an education than in Iraq or Syria. The Arab social order has been transformed. A new urban middle class, an educated and vociferous youth, a new class of hired Arab labourers, have sprung up; a new political Arab life—naturally expressed in violent nationalism—has begun.

In politics Palestine-Arab nationalism and resistance to Jewish penetration is only part of the general, painful stirring of the Arabs throughout the Middle East. Opponents of the Arabs who cannot see this have miscalculated badly. It is quite true that the Arab ruling class is still invariably torn by bitter dissension between rival groups, degenerating almost into civil war. Yet before the

common enemy these dissensions vanish. Class differences between the effendis and fellah are still abysmal. The big Arab landlords and usurers are still ruthlessly expropriating the fellah ; Arab municipal government has remained a corrupt misuse of power in the hands of a few small cliques. And yet, at a crisis, the mass of the Arabs will stand behind their national leaders.

Equally it is true that every single one of the big feudal Arab families who are loudly agitating against Jewish land-purchases is rushing to sell its own land at the highest price. While the Mufti in Jerusalem poses as anti-imperialist to American journalists, or quotes the Protocols of the Elders of Zion to British Enquiry Commissions, his own family, the Husseinis, is making bargains with Jews, or even co-operating with Jewish land-speculators. In fact, a new term has been coined in Palestine: Ishmaelism, which means, selling one's land at fantastic prices, and then conducting unscrupulous political agitation to get it back—or at least drive prices for the remaining land still higher !

Yet behind this corruption, class exploitation, and dissension, there is the fact of the Palestine-Arab nationalist movement. Nationalism, once wrote Borohov, the Socialist Zionist leader, is the movement of a group of people become conscious of common oppression. So with the Palestine Arabs. National dangers have become part of their consciousness. Apart from all class differences, from the leaders instigating terrorism to the fellah supporting the Arab bands, the overwhelming majority of the Arabs stand behind an inarticulate Arab national urge.

In the special circumstances of Palestine, however, the nationalist movement of the Palestine Arabs, was also given a special twist.

From the first, Arab nationalism in Palestine was fighting a defensive battle against Zionism. The Jews were coming into Palestine, pouring their capital into the country, enriching and changing Arab society too. But at the same time, even while the Arabs were profiting and progressing,

they saw the Jews treating the country as though it were their own by right, and would soon be so in fact, and as though they, the Arabs, did not exist. There must have been something quite uncanny to the Arabs about this invasion. At first the Jews seemed a negligible minority, but before the Arabs had properly become aware of the change, the Jews were already strongly established at all key points of the country. Few nations could have been politically more inert and divided than the Palestine Arabs in 1920. But growing fear of a Jewish domination, which seemed to imply their annihilation as a national and cultural entity, roused the Arabs into united opposition. The peculiar intransigence of the closed Zionist ranks bred similar uncompromising extremism on the Arab side. And the Arabs expressed this extremism in the obvious and only way they knew : by outbreaks of riots, shooting, and terrorism which, in the last two years, have continued without a stop.

This special character of Palestine-Arab nationalism has determined the social make-up of the movement.

In Egypt, in Syria, or in the Lebanon, to a certain extent, the progressive elements of the nation, the intellectuals, the rising middle class, took part in the national movements for liberation, and within limits set the tone for them. The nationalists in Egypt and Syria had some sort of social programme. In Palestine, on the contrary, the national movement is led by the most reactionary feudal and clerical leaders in the country. The Mufti, who rose to power by using religious obscurantism for his own family aggrandisement, has never formulated a social programme. If he has any ideas on popular education, democracy, or municipal government, they would compare unfavourably with those of General Franco. As with the Mufti, so with the whole movement he leads. Beyond shooting, terrorism, and a few political catch-phrases, such as independence, self-government, no more Zionism, the Palestine Arab nationalists have no programme. In the East, in any case, a political party can carry on for years without a clear-cut

policy. A few catch-phrases, quickly snapped up and superficially assimilated, can be sufficient. The Arab leaders in Palestine are still Levantine Arabs of the old generation. As their public appearances, their speeches and writings show, they still only half grasp the real world, and half are caught in the world of their own passionate distortions and imaginings. Truth and untruth for them lie in a confused borderland. For instance, Jamal Husseini, a big Arab landlord, a cousin of the Mufti, and an extreme nationalist, could say to the Peel Commission :<sup>1</sup>

‘ A person like myself, who, before the War, travelled from Haifa to Jenin or from Jenin to Tiberias or Beisan, passed through one Arab village after another, enjoying the hospitality of the simple village folk, with their ever-smiling faces, who has seen them vie with one another, even sometimes to the point of quarrelling, as to who will have the pleasure of having the visitor as his guest—such a person, if he now drives through or near those places, will stand aghast and bewildered.

‘ The villages are no more. Twenty-two villages have already been wiped out of existence in the northern district. What has been the fate of the smiling faces, and what has been the destiny of those who rushed to the traveller to bring him home as their honoured guest ? ’

The reference here is to the Valley of Jezreel which, as Jamal knew, and as plenty of impartial witnesses have declared, was bought by the Jews as a dreary, malarial waste, stagnant and marshy, marked with ruins, abandoned even by the German Templars, those exceptionally skilful farmers, who had in vain tried to establish their villages there. This whole sentimental account of twenty-two populous villages destroyed by the Zionists is a piece of Oriental imagination, believed by nobody in Palestine, least of all by the Peel Commission which had obvious means of finding out the truth.

Or take another barefaced lie by Auni Abdul Hadi, the

<sup>1</sup> Evidence before Peel Commission, p. 324.

Palestine Arabs' usual representative at Geneva. The quotation is from his evidence before the Peel Commission :

Professor Coupland (questioning) : ' In so far as that (limiting interest rates) has not been observed and the interest has been excessive, to what race have the moneylenders belonged ? '

Auni : ' I think the Jews who have lived here before the War were the main moneylenders ; they are more usurers than any other people in any other part of the world. Their main business was limited to moneylending. In Iraq.'

Professor Coupland : ' I am not talking of Iraq. Would he answer this question : Is the bulk of the money now owed by the fellaheen of this country owed to Arabs or to Jews ? '

Auni : ' The greater part belongs to the Jews.'<sup>1</sup>

The point is that in each case the lie was one which could so easily be shown up that it served no purpose at all. But the writer is sure that here was no conscious and unscrupulous lying for ulterior political purposes, as Goebbels might lie. At the moment of giving evidence, Jamal was sure that flourishing Arab villages had really been wiped out in Jezreel, and Auni was sure Arab moneylenders did not exist. The Jews were the political opponents ; they must therefore be the usurers and exploiters of the poor fellah ! Exaggeration, crass distortions, and untruths have always been part of the Eastern political mind. The Palestine-Arab leaders, typical reactionaries, still flounder amidst them.

The dynamic force of Arab nationalism, however, is represented by the educated Arab youth.

The young Arabs turned out by the school system of the Palestine Government are much the same as their contemporaries in other Arab countries. On the whole, one can feel sorry for these young men. They are repressed, frustrated, one-sided. They are educated as Europeans, yet the deadweight of Moslem tradition haunts them, the lack of normal social life around them gives them a social instability and a strong sense of inferiority, they are

<sup>1</sup> Evidence before Peel Commission, p. 310.

struggling hard to understand, and really assimilate, the Western science and thought-habits they have acquired. And the one thing that seems clear and obvious to understand is the European concept of power and totalitarian rule—fascist ideology. Eagerly the Palestine-Arab youth surrendered itself to this doctrine. As the fascists in other countries, they will fight for power. Palestine, Jewish and Arab, shall be theirs to rule.

A reasonably fair Jewish observer wrote of this youth in 1935 :

‘ The Arab movement was at its beginning confined to an upper class of landowners, professional intelligentsia and clergy. Later, however, there came up an always more numerous class of youth aspiring to governmental positions and other easy jobs. This youthful intelligentsia, superficially educated in the Levantine way, now forms the backbone of Arab nationalism in Palestine. This youth is similar in its social structure to the elements most active in the ascendancy of Fascism in Italy and in the Hitler movement in Germany.’<sup>1</sup>

The Peel Commission, two years later, was similarly impressed :

‘ We have seen how the “ Youth Movement,” which has played so large a part in recent years in the efflorescence of nationalism in Egypt and Syria, has lately spread in Palestine.

‘ It inevitably attracts the keener-minded young Arabs. It offers him opportunities of active service in the national cause as “ scouts ”—and these “ scouts ” do actually and usefully scout—or as patrols to enforce a “ strike ” or “ boycott,” or even as assassins.

‘ Its adherence had nothing to do with “ moderates.” They are quick to denounce the official leadership of their cause when they think it too slow or too timid. They talk of new men and methods, and, as in Syria, they take a sympathetic interest in Fascism. They are quite unmoved by economic arguments. They interpret their crusade in terms of conflict and sacrifice, not of peace and prosperity.’<sup>2</sup>

For this youth there is only one struggle in Palestine, that for out-and-out supremacy.

<sup>1</sup> A. Revusky, *Jews in Palestine*, p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> *Peel Report*, p. 134.

And so there are really two Arab nationalist movements in Palestine. The first represents a movement of almost the whole Arab people of Palestine for national liberation against the British and Zionists, which saw in violence the only method of stopping Zionist penetration, and was consciously supported by every Arab, from the officials and *bourgeoisie* to the villagers and workers. From its second aspect, Palestine-Arab nationalism is the bid for power by a small, ruthless reactionary clique with not one trace of progressive social aims, led by the Mufti and supported by a fascist-minded youth fired by German and Italian examples ; a bid to seize rule in Palestine, plunder the Jews, and reduce the Jewish and Arab masses to servitude in that Levantine Arab version of a tenth-rate little fascist state which the Mufti and his followers have in mind. This was perhaps hardly the aim of the Arab peasants and workers, but certainly that of the Mufti when he gambled on international complications in launching his rebellion in the summer 1936. It was a slightly crazy bid which (in spite of moral support from Germany, Italy, and the British extreme right) failed hopelessly, as it was bound to fail. Except for purely destructive purposes, Arab military power in Palestine is weak enough. The Jews, a concentrated block of 400,000 people as against a million scattered Arabs, better organized, better armed, are already far too strong to be attacked directly. And they are determined ; national and class factors would make them fight to the last rather than submit to the Mufti. But if he could not dominate, the Mufti could at least create disorder and deadlock. And the tragedy of Palestine, particularly of Arab Palestine, is that through Jewish 'defensive chauvinism' and British indifference, through complete lack of initiative from any side, the Arab extremists have had an easy task in crushing all moderate and progressive Arab nationalist elements. They could not shake the Jews or the British, yet with Arab obstinacy they have not given in. Blindly, refusing all compromise, they are continuing to the bitter end, and the country has been

plunged into a terrorist regime in which Jews, British, and even more Arabs have been murdered, and the whole population, Arabs even more than Jews, is sinking into impoverishment, unhappiness, and utter political deadlock.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### PALESTINE OF THE BRITISH

LITTLE need be said about British rule in Palestine, because from the economic point of view Palestine was never of first importance; and in fact, apart from safeguarding a few strategic interests, the British have had no clear policy in Palestine at all—because of the general British imperial retreat, because, as the officials complained, the contradictions of the Mandate made it impossible of execution, because European Jews and Zionism could not be fitted into the Colonial Office system, or because British policy was consistently divided about Palestine, or for all these reasons together.

As a rule the small stage of Palestine has been so filled by the clamours of Zionism and its Arab nationalist opponents that the British in Palestine, officials, police, military, even though ruling the country, have seemed like strangers and outsiders, whether in the grim atmosphere of Arab Nablus or in the crowded streets of Jewish Tel Aviv.

The first British officials in Palestine, haphazardly picked for the haphazardly created Mandated Territory, were rather a scratch lot. Most of them have gradually been replaced, and the British officials and policemen in Palestine to-day conform to the typical pattern of the Colonial Empire.

There are any number of well-set-up young men whom a variety of social and economic motives has sent out of England and brought to Palestine.

Except for the small handful of superior Colonial Office men, who hold all the best positions, they are from the

class which in England is known as the lesser or near-Public School type.

At their best, they are like the young men in Somerset Maugham's short stories, uneducated, yet likeable and courageous ; honest, if limited idealists, keen on their job, with a strong sense of duty and a good deal of hidden romanticism.

Most often, however, they tend to-day to wear the green pork-pie hat denoting Fascist mentality, together with a bold, defiant moustache, to dress and behave in an excessively Public School and County manner, cling to their herd instincts, and bolster up their British ego by haughty treatment of the natives, that is, their Jewish and Arab subordinates.

They are not very well paid ; but they are frequently met in the upper-class bars of Jerusalem, Haifa, or Tel Aviv, where they throw defiant glances at the colonial surroundings over a glass of whisky or sometimes even Palestinian beer. Their liking for the Arabs is that of officers for picturesque natives ; their dislike for the Jews they meet (who, on the whole, are much better educated) is easy to understand. They are uneducated, reactionary, with closed minds, no knowledge of the fundamental social and economic problems of Palestine, or indeed of any fundamentals, and quite inadequate to their task, as the history of the Palestine administration shows.

Compared, for instance, with the way in which the Jewish Labour Federation, with much smaller means, built up its Sick Fund Insurance or co-operative building groups, a number of Palestine Government departments are examples of suburban incompetence and helpless mal-administration.

In addition, of course, there are individual officials, particularly among the senior grades, who are capable and efficient men, keenly interested in their work, trying to perform it to the best of their ability. But these are few and far between, and handicapped by the general spirit of obstruction and indifference prevailing throughout the Administration, and handicapped, further, by the colonial

caste spirit raising an insuperable social barrier between "white" British officials and "native" Jews and Arabs, a rather incongruous barrier in Palestine.

The administration of Palestine, in any case, presented unique difficulties because of the perpetual conflict in the interpretation of the Mandate. No official step could be taken which would not immediately rouse jealous Jewish opposition, or Arab, or both. After the first years the flood of Zionist immigration and the revolutionary changes in the country would have taxed the ingenuity even of an efficient Administration. But the Palestine Government was not composed of efficient men. The result was what might have been expected.

In fact, what emerges from the twenty years of British rule in Palestine is that British imperialism is not only reactionary, but curiously old-fashioned. The first officials were picked in haphazard fashion from a temporary military administration. Men who had been in charge of field telephones or camp sanitation were suddenly put in charge of Government social services in a small but complex country. But, in these days of dictatorships, amateur government is badly out of date. Reading through the *Peel Report*, one constantly sees the Commission emphasizing the amateur nature of the Government, its lack of expert knowledge, its general inadequacy :

'That Tel Aviv should feel impatient with the slow rate of progress to which Government feels committed is readily understandable, and there is obviously a constant source of friction in the subjection of a highly educated and democratic community to the control of a District Commissioner, who has many other duties to attend to. . . . The more advanced and politically-minded an Arab municipality becomes, the less ready will it be to acquiesce in control by the Mandatory Administration. The Jewish municipalities accept the Mandate, but, nevertheless, . . . it is not the normal relationship between central and local organs of the same national and constitutional character. On the one side are highly democratic Jewish bodies, on the other a British Government of the Crown Colony type.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Peel Report*, p. 355-6.

The theoretical objections of the *Peel Report* hide a much sordier case of muddle and inefficiency. Nehru, the Indian Congress leader, said once that he would have preferred even inefficient self-government to efficient imperialism, but this was no longer the issue: India had progressed beyond colonial status, and the technique of British colonial government could in no way be called adequate any longer. The same in Palestine. There was no policy. The British Home Government swung now to the side of the Jews, now to the Arabs. The one line which seemed to be steadily followed was the development of Palestine as a military keypoint of the British Empire. But, owing to the growth of the rival forces within the country, it appears as if its military problem is equally growing more difficult.

In internal affairs, apart from the elementary tasks of government, the British Administration has been more a spectator than a participant in the development of the country. It did not actually oppose the growth of the Jewish National Home, but gave it no active help. And, indirectly, Jewish development was hampered by the shortcomings of the Administration. The list of these shortcomings includes all spheres of government. The country was in a devastated condition when the British took over, yet on Government initiative little was done for agriculture or afforestation. An antiquated railway system with out-of-date stock was taken over, and run without any change until two years ago. The Tel Aviv and Jaffa urban and suburban area, containing a quarter of the country's population (300,000 people), is only served by a clumsy branch line. Tel Aviv and Jaffa together are the only coastal urban area of the same population in the Mediterranean, or anywhere in Europe, without a deep-water port. The Jews had to build their own lighter port in a few months to make good the deficiency. To prevent the deficit of this mismanaged railway from rising still more, no main road to connect Tel Aviv-Jaffa with Haifa was built till 1936-7, when insecurity and disturbances forced

the Government's hand. During the great Jewish immigration years the postal services were chaotic. The telephone service for Tel Aviv, which the local municipality could have arranged as easily as its water or omnibus service, was so mismanaged that applicants had to wait a year for telephones. During the historic feat of building the water supply for Jerusalem, the pumping-stations were put up faultlessly in record time by a Histadrut co-operative. The actual laying of the pipe-line, in the hands of Government, became a farcical affair of endless delays and pipe-bursts all the way from the plains to the Jerusalem hills, which took months to repair. An ironical official of the Iraq Petroleum Company told the writer that, had his company constructed the famous Mosul-Haifa pipe-line at the same rate as the Palestine Public Works Department, it would have taken a hundred and ten years to finish the job. . . . A clumsy obstructive system of land legislature was taken over from Turkish times and left unchanged. The police and C.I.D. were notoriously inefficient, or else given little chance to work. . . . The list could be continued almost indefinitely. In short, the Government's attitude towards the Jews was petty and niggardly, towards the Arabs repressive, satisfying neither party. The *Peel Report* shows that (in the view of the Commission) from the administrative as much as from the political point of view, the situation was slowly becoming untenable. And, in fact, the history of Palestine since the War shows plainly that when once a certain complexity of social problems in a colonial country has been reached, imperialism and its administrative machine are no longer adequate to control, let alone solve them.

And so, ultimately, in Palestine as in any other colony, there are three possibilities before British imperialism: to retreat before native nationalism, as in Iraq; to suppress native movements with all ruthlessness like the Italians in Libya; or to create such conditions of internal dissension that imperialist military occupation appears indispensable.

This last alternative was to a certain extent attempted in

Palestine, but from the history of Palestine it is clear that the Colonial Office badly underestimated both Arab and Jewish nationalism, until British power rested more and more uncomfortably upon the conflicting forces which it had conjured up. The Mediterranean crisis of 1935-7, with the wave of nationalist uprisings it sent across the Middle East, forced a change. The *Peel Report*, harkening back to an earlier, bolder period of British imperialism, proposed an incisive rectification of the map of Palestine and local administrative autonomy—under British protection :

‘ The Arabs of Palestine, it has been admitted, are as fit to govern themselves as the Arabs of Iraq or Syria. The Jews of Palestine, it is clear, are as fit to govern themselves as any educated community in Europe or elsewhere.’

The recommendation was at once accepted by the British Government. But in the meantime those menacing guns (German, Italian, Spanish?) had been mounted opposite Gibraltar. The question of British rule in Palestine had become part of the question of British rule in the East in general. And, in one swift change, as the fascist empires expanded, the relation between the small nations of the Mediterranean and Britain and France was suddenly no longer simple, the fluctuations of British policy in Palestine and the rest of the Mediterranean difficult to foresee.

## CHAPTER XXIV

PALESTINE, 1938

THE year 1938 started gloomily in Palestine. Terrorism was rife in the country. There was nervousness in Europe. In Spain the battle of Teruel was being waged.

In February, Sir Arthur Wauchope, a frail, sad little man in a grey top-hat, drove slowly for the last time through Jerusalem . . . and then into retirement. During his last phase he had again become strongly pro-Jewish. He wanted a certain personal affection, and only the Jews were ready to offer it to him. His successor, Sir Harold MacMichael, straight from Tanganyika, immediately brought a more regular colonial atmosphere to Government House.

In February the absence of Spanish competition caused a marked rise in price of Palestine citrus fruit in the English market. The economic position of the country seemed slightly improved. At the same time several Arab nationalist terrorist bands organized by the Mufti from Syria, who had terrorized Arab peasants rather than Jews, were rounded up and destroyed.

On March 13 Hitler marched into Austria, and once again everything that had happened before this date had somehow become prehistoric.

Almost at once Britain and Italy came to a temporary agreement in the Mediterranean at the cost of Abyssinia and Spain, which opened up opportunities of arriving at a temporary settlement in Palestine. A new technical 'Partition Commission' to determine the details of a Partition scheme or, alternatively, to decide its feasibility, arrived in Palestine.

During May and June the Commission heard evidence from the Palestine Government and the Jewish Agency, and drew up a full, detailed scheme for the Partition of Palestine . . . if there was to be Partition. But the Colonial Office, and, ultimately, the British Cabinet, gave no indication this policy was to be followed, or whether the Commission was only a stopgap.

During the early summer of 1938, while the Commission was sitting in Palestine, the international situation, by way of the Czechoslovakian crisis and the Mussolini-Franco bombing of British ships, gently slid again towards the danger-point.

In Palestine, in July, rioting flared up again on the biggest scale, this time with effective reprisals by Jewish extremists ; bomb explosions and shots created havoc on the modern Haifa waterfront, Haifa had its first curfew, and there were several hundred casualties, mostly Arabs, before the outbreak was quelled with the aid of British reinforcements rushed up from Egypt. Tension rose, British prestige dropped still further ; *The Times* commented in a leading article full of pessimism that the arrival of another infantry brigade (not easily spared from other duties) might lead to an improvement.

‘ But before this happens it is only too probable that the younger Jews, their patience exhausted by *the obvious inability of the British authorities to protect them*, will have their fling at their Arab enemies, cost them what it may ; and it is only too certain that many more lives will be lost in assassinations and affrays before order is restored in the Holy Land.’<sup>1</sup>

Frightened by the intensity of the rioting, Malcolm MacDonald, transferred to the Colonial Office after his successful termination of Anglo-Eire negotiations, sent an urgent message to the Commission to return to London at the earliest possible moment with some completed scheme. . . . And in the meantime another citrus season was approaching, and both Jews and Arabs were watching,

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, July 6, 1938.



while across the Mediterranean Franco's armies were now spreading destruction across the Valencia orange groves. And the first Austrian Jewish refugees, mostly destitute, were arriving in Palestine, a few handfuls illegally, driven only by their desperation. . . .

*Part Five*

THE PRESENT POSITION



## CHAPTER XXV

### PALESTINE AND THE JEWS

**T**O sum up the political situation in a small country like Palestine at this present stage of international chaos is exceedingly difficult ; to prophesy, exceedingly dangerous. The time is past when, as a few years ago, one could still take refuge in generalizations and say, for instance, that the national issue could only be finally solved in a Socialist Palestine. To-day, the writer feels, no useful purpose is served by discussing anything except the next few years, or the next decade—if that.

What has remained of the Jewish dream in Palestine ? The few summarizing remarks attempted here are made from the Jewish point of view—in spite of its recent setback, the writer still regards Zionism, which in twenty years has changed the face of Palestine, as the major political factor in the country. Recently the real scope of Zionism has emerged from propagandist confusion. It has revealed itself as a gigantic Jewish self-help or philanthropic movement, in which the six million 'free' Jews of America, the British Empire, and Western Europe have tried to help some of the six million 'lost' Jews of Germany and Eastern Europe to temporary safety in Palestine, until such time as they themselves might need saving. But, in the meantime, a compact community of more than 400,000 Jews has already sprung up on the shores of Palestine.

The question is how much longer this movement can continue. In Palestine itself short-term prospects are by no means wholly unfavourable. What may perhaps favour Zionism is that, after over two years of high tension

in the Mediterranean, a measure of British-Italian appeasement or at least armistice has been temporarily brought about. Simultaneously, the British Government is more seriously considering the project of dividing Palestine into the two proposed States, one purely Arab, the other with prospects for the Jews. But it is a mistake, frequently made, to regard the future of Zionism as wholly dependent upon imperialist bargaining. The Jewish crisis is part of the world capitalist crisis, yet in a queer way the Jews, and Zionism, because of their international character, fall *in between* the great conflicts. It is remarkable how steadily the Zionist movement has gone on for over forty years, surviving the Turks, the World War, the Peace. Political events outside have caused violent fluctuations in Palestine, yet, ultimately, the political and economic situation itself has been the decisive factor. At the moment there is the possibility of a breathing space ; from the Jewish standpoint, therefore, the question is whether—as long as anti-Semitic pressure upon world Jewry grows, and every sign indicates that it will—a new and greater Jewish effort can be launched in Palestine.

Only the immediate prospects and the immediate future are here considered ; short views are the only possible ones to-day. Within this short view a certain indication of the future is given by the experience of the last twenty years in Palestine.

Summarized, this experience is that thanks to exceptionally large Jewish capital investments, plus Jewish organization and tenacity, over 400,000 Jews have been successfully established in Palestine ; considerable sections of Palestine have been transformed from an Asiatic to a European economy ; on the whole, the Palestine Arabs, who have increased prodigiously in numbers, have benefited by this transformation. The conclusions of the Peel Commission on this point are objective and definite : Jewish capital imports have had a general fructifying effect, largely financing the expansion of Arab industry and citriculture. Jewish example improved Arab cultivation,

especially of citrus, Jewish development has increased Arab urban employment and investment, Jewish reclamation and anti-malarial work improved the health of the whole country ; most important, rising tax receipts largely provided by Jews paid for Government social services for the whole population—social services which, however meagre, have yet made Palestine ‘more advanced than any of its neighbours and far more advanced than . . . an Indian province or an African colony.’ Not too much should be made of this ; the mass of the Palestine Arabs still live at a deplorably low level ; yet, unquestionably, with Jewish immigration their level has risen above that of the villagers of Egypt and Iraq.

But experience also shows that Jewish immigration on strictly nationalist lines, striving to create an all-Jewish ‘Eretz Israel’ in a mixed Palestine, must lead to political clash, boycott, disturbances, and deadlock in which its economic benefits are swiftly reduced ; in short, that such immigration must create that intense Jewish-Arab hostility in which it becomes impossible. Arab nationalist aspirations and Jewish immigration must in any case have been in opposition, but it was past Zionist policy which largely raised this opposition to an unbearably acute pitch. And here it is not only a question of Jewish nationalism. Zionism, and Arab nationalism are not quite identical movements. Zionism need not be identical with an attempt to ignore the Arabs or with an utterly uncompromising attitude towards the Arabs. In fact, such a policy could only be proclaimed theoretically. The moment large-scale immigration set in, it was shown that it was politically impossible to have two different national units, each striving for segregation, in one country under one central government. As soon as large-scale industrial investments had been made in the country, it was shown that economic isolation was equally impossible. Tariffs afforded only one instance. Jewish industrialization, under an ‘Open Door’ policy, was shown to be practically impossible, but tariffs cannot be put up without considering

the interests of the 700,000 rural Arabs—yet this is just what Zionists would not do. In fact, economic isolation between the Jewish and Arab sectors, preventing any rational tariff policy, has at once undermined Jewish industry. Immediately after Jewish mass immigration took place, economic and political isolation has been shown to be impossible, throwing the country into three years of confusion. As a result, during one of the worst periods of anti-Semitism, ultra-nationalist Zionism partly brought about its own standstill. Anti-Semitic pressure kept Jewish Palestine and Zionism going, but no more.

Partly, this extreme deadlock was due to the narrow outlook and certain delusions of Zionist policy and the Zionist leadership. For twenty years the Zionists, relying entirely on British aid, have tried to ignore the Arabs and camouflage the issue by confused propaganda, in which Palestine was Jewish by historical and international right, and the intransigence of the Histadrut was justified by the general economic progress of the Palestine Arabs. When, in 1935, Arab nationalism arose as a factor no longer to be ignored the Zionists at first, had no policy beyond passionate self-defence, passionate justification, and wild accusations against their opponents. As a result, the Palestine issue degenerated into a struggle between equally uncompromising Jewish and Arab nationalists, each claiming all Palestine as *irredenta*, and returning an answer of *non possumus* to any suggestion of compromise. As a result of this lack of any wider Zionist policy, Zionism as a movement attracting intelligent Jews declined rapidly during the last three years, particularly among the youth, even at a time of unprecedented anti-Semitic pressure.

That was in the last three years. Now, suddenly, the ruthless historical forces behind Zionism have again thrown the movement into the foreground. Hitler's dramatic march into Austria and the insane persecution of the Vienna Jews have stirred the Jewish conscience and intensified Jewish fears in every country. The stark reality of the Jewish problem has come nearer ; self-help

had suddenly become ten times more urgent. At the same time Hitler's aggression has once again changed the Mediterranean situation. The Anglo-Italian agreement, to be followed perhaps by similar agreement between Italy and France, has abruptly and unexpectedly relieved Mediterranean tension and equally brought Syria, Iraq, Egypt into closer relations with the Western powers. A certain quietness, a calm before the storm, perhaps, has come into the Middle Eastern atmosphere. Pan-Arabism for the moment is no longer a political factor of any significance. In Syria the weak Arab government, with its treasury empty, ruling over two million subjects scattered over a huge country with probably oil resources coveted by both Turkey and Italy, has been shown as still dependent on French aid for its existence. The Palestine Arabs are exhausted; weakened and unsuccessful, the extremist nationalist movement has become isolated from the bulk of the people. Deprived of Italian moral support, the Mufti's terrorist movement (which has never yet succeeded in invading the smallest Jewish settlement) has been revealed as the poor, ill-equipped, ill-organized movement it really is. The persistent reign of terrorism has revealed the strength of Arab nationalism, but also its limits, which it cannot transcend.

As far as British policy can be judged, the British Government appears to be slowly proceeding towards a scheme of the Partition of Palestine, more or less on the lines suggested in the *Peel Report*, into two States or cantons (they are much more likely to remain cantons), an inland Arab canton of about 800,000 people, and a coastal Jewish canton of 700,000 people, the majority, though not a large majority, Jews. What is behind this policy? Imperialist design, certainly. Britain, it appears, wishes to control the strategic coastal area of Palestine, and has apparently decided that close Jewish settlement in this area would be a considerable source of added strength. But this is not everything. Zionism has its own existence. If British policy provided the framework for Zionism, it has equally



been determined by the totally unexpected success of Zionist colonization.

Partition can only offer the most temporary solution ; the cutting up of the Levant coast of Syria and Palestine into six small separate units is an *unnatural and temporary* strategem, reflecting the present patchwork of populations. A federation of the Levant would be the only natural unit. But at the moment such a project is out of the question. The small nations of the Levant cannot shape their own destiny. British and French imperialism could only be exchanged for Italian, German, or Turkish overlordship. For the British Government, Partition seems the least difficult way out, diminishing the tension in Palestine by a certain separation of Arabs and Jews.

But for the Zionists Partition and the prospect of a Jewish state, however small, might under favourable conditions mean a great step forward.

The catastrophe of the Vienna Jews has sent a shock through world Jewry ; opposition to Palestine (though not against Zionist pretensions) has been stilled. A rational Palestine policy, showing a true picture of Palestine and offering real prospects, could be sure of support. The Partition scheme, if successfully carried out, might open out such prospects in a Jewish preserve. The Palestine Jews would at last be able to administer Jewish colonization, particularly on the all-important tariff and taxation issues. Outside Jewish support on a really large scale might at last be gained. There might be a chance of mass immigration, together with so great an influx of Jewish capital, Jewish organization, Jewish labour, that in spite of all inevitable losses, and backwash, and investments necessarily *à fond perdu*, the greater part of the immigrants would again become established. Palestine is part of a block of countries whose economic development is steadily progressing. Dense Jewish settlement and intensive cultivation in the coastal zone could probably be achieved with little difficulty. If another half-million Jews were to be settled on the Palestine coast, a foothold would have

been gained, from which even further colonization into neighbouring empty areas might be feasible.

But how much chance is there that such a small Jewish-Arab State or canton can develop side by side with a small Arab State? The launching of such a State must presuppose a radical change in Zionist policy. And one might say that to assume chances of progress in the mixed Jewish-Arab State is entirely to ignore the factor of Arab nationalism. The Peel Commission itself, for instance, wrote :

‘ An irrepressible conflict has arisen between two national communities within the narrow bounds of one small country. About one million Arabs are in strife, open or latent, with some 100,000 Jews. There is no common ground between them. The Arab community is predominantly Asiatic in character, the Jewish community predominantly European. They differ in religion and in language. Their cultural and social life, their ways of thought and conduct, are as incompatible as their national aspirations.’

This is simply not more than a half-truth. On the one hand, the Mediterranean countries are all fast changing and progressing. On the other hand, the Jews are fast acclimatizing to Palestine. Nearly one-third of the Jewish children in Palestine are born of Oriental Jewish parents. On a Saturday night in Jerusalem, when the Oriental Jews suddenly emerge in thousands upon the streets, or on a Sunday afternoon when Arabs in European dress stroll through the Jewish shopping district, a much clearer picture of the mixed population of Palestine of the future is given. It is no accident that Haifa, Palestine's chief business centre, half-Jewish and half-Arab, has been the least troubled of all cities in Palestine.<sup>1</sup> Would the Peel Commission say that in one generation from to-day the population of Haifa must consist of two socially and culturally quite incompatible communities?

The Peel Commission itself knows this was not true. Otherwise it would never have tried to include 300,000 Arabs with the biggest Arab community in the country, that of Haifa, in the Jewish State.

<sup>1</sup> Only as this book goes to press, in July 1938, has the first serious outbreak occurred in Haifa.

But even if it can be assumed that at the present stage Arab nationalism is too weak to offer serious opposition to the British forces and the strongly organized Jews in carrying out some sort of Partition scheme, there is the question how far a solution enforced by British bayonets, and already no longer by bayonets, but by machine-guns and aeroplanes, has any lasting value? The Arab nationalist leaders claim the right of the Arab majority to rule over the whole of their country. The partition of a small country is a clumsy mechanism, and it is perhaps no accident that a small group of Irishmen in the British Administration of Palestine have been consistent enemies of the Balfour Declaration. The Palestine Arabs have never been consulted. As far as right and justice are concerned, is the revolt of the Arabs for national independence and against the partition of their country any less justified than the Irish republican rebellion which gained world-wide sympathy?

Mr. Vincent Sheean, for instance, was sure of the justice of the Arab cause when he wrote in 1935:

‘I was not blind to the existence of social and economic problems within the Arab world; I knew enough about the system of Arab feudalism to realize that the lower classes might not fare much better under a government of their own aristocracy than under a government of British and Jews; but I believed, as I had always believed, that the first duty of a popular leader was to obtain the freedom of his people. This sense was the only one in which nationalism had appealed to me; as a first stage, that is, and not as an end.’<sup>1</sup>

But to remove the struggle in Palestine out of its context, out of the wider conflict of which it is only a symptom, is really to simplify it out of existence. Mr. Sheean takes a long view; it is equally impossible at this present stage of short-range prospects not to take a broad view, too, seeing the Palestine problem in the midst of its setting of class struggles and international conflicts in the Mediterranean.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *In Search of History*, p. 429.

<sup>2</sup> And may one suggest that Mr. Sheean was able to take a long view and write that ‘the Zionist policy was historically without significance . . . it might delude two or three generations of Jews, who would be

With all due caution, and limiting his remarks to the present political phase (and after all there is no other possibility), the writer would say that there are significant points of difference between Palestine and Ireland.

First, the struggle in Palestine is not a simple Arab struggle against British imperialism, but three-fold ; Palestine is to-day a mixed country, and it is useless to treat it as anything else ; the Palestine Arabs, an oppressed colonial people, the Jews, victims of Fascism, are both fighting for national existence and national rights. It all hangs together ; the capitalist world is one unit. Similarly, the social background of the struggle is decisively different. Ireland was a country conquered by force ; its population had been defeated, massacred, and despoiled. The Irish revolt was one of the Irish middle class, peasants, and workers against foreign parasitic British landlords, rulers, and exploiters. Arab nationalism to-day is, on the contrary, led by the big Arab landowning families and exploited as a means for consolidating their powers in the country. Social and political struggles change. The loose concept 'nationalism' can include divergent movements. In the nineteenth century nationalism represented the struggle of the European *bourgeoisie* against feudal reaction. Immediately after the Great War, nationalist movements were the struggle of oppressed colonial nations against European imperialism. To-day 'nationalist movements', for instance in Czechoslovakia, Spanish Morocco, Spain, have become strong instruments in the fascist war against democracy. No national struggle for liberation was more genuine than that of Poland. To-day Polish nationalism stands for better employed in other enterprises . . . but in the end it would have to be swallowed up in the larger changes through which the world must pass if it were to emerge from chaos and submit to reason . . . ' because he was also able to write : ' . . . It was with the profoundest feelings of relief that I left that wretched little country—the "Holy Land"—behind . . . I was able to break the journey home by a week in Athens, a week in Vienna, a week in London.'

For the Arab as well as the Jewish workers of Palestine, dictatorial rule by Mr. Sheean's friend, the Mufti, would, in the short run, be a very different matter.

Polish aggrandisement and the subjection of minorities, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Jews, under Polish rule. And so in Palestine, strategically, in the social struggle, the present Arab nationalist movement cannot be placed parallel with the Irish revolt. One cannot ignore the fascist alignment of the Mufti and the Arab youth movements, or fail to see that this national revolt is at the same time an attempt by the Arab ruling class to seize power and plunge the country, Jews and Arabs alike, into the darkness of a petty fascist State ; or that the Jews, predominantly educated middle class and organized workers, on the whole represent the progressive elements in the country -- provided they are ready to play a progressive role.

And here Zionism stands before a critical turning-point.

If the three years of deadlock had any lesson for the Jews it was this : that, outside the main street of Tel Aviv, an all-Jewish Eretz Israel is an unreal figment of the imagination, a mixed Jewish-Arab Palestine, in which no section of the Arabs can be ignored, the only reality. The Partition proposals have at least done service in clarifying the issue. By putting the Jews in the proposed small Jewish State face to face with a considerable Arab minority, both the possibilities of achieving such a State and the only way of achieving it should be made clear.

It can only come about if the Jewish majority treats it from the first as a mixed State, bound to remain a mixed State, and nothing else. Class issues as much as national issues exist in Palestine, particularly for the fellahien and the Arab town-poor, still kept in feudal darkness by their own ruling class. The only way of incorporating an Arab minority in the mixed Jewish-Arab State, and therefore of making the State possible, is by immediate integration. From the start the Arabs would have to be given full social, economic, and cultural equality. What would this mean for Zionism ? It would have to mean a fundamental change, abandoning the ultra-nationalist baggage of a wholly Jewish Eretz Israel, modifying the Jewish National Fund principles of 'inalienable Jewish land,' where no

Arab may work, abandoning the whole striving after Jewish exclusiveness, with its exaggerated propaganda. Previously, the Zionists had claimed that their weakness made initiative or concessions on their part impossible. But in the new mixed State they would be strong enough to include the Arabs in all Jewish national, public, and co-operative institutions. Responsibility rests above all with the Histadrut. The Histadrut dominates half of Jewish Palestine and Zionism. It has built up an exceptionally strong Jewish working-class organization. Would it open its ranks at once, without reserve, to Arab workers, creating a united working-class front to become a strong decisive factor in Palestine's political life? Such joint organization, if genuinely established, could open up new possibilities of Jewish immigration; it might create far greater support for Zionism among the Jews.

But this would mean a complete reversal of that Zionist policy of the last two years which, fundamentally, has treated all Arabs, moderates and extremists alike, at least as potential enemies; that policy by which the Zionist leaders as much as the Arab nationalists have appealed for national segregation, frantic 'defence of national positions', and which could only end in two completely hostile nations in Palestine. Confused by their own propaganda, the Zionist leaders have tried to delude themselves and the Jews outside Palestine that the opposition of a million Arabs to an 'Eretz Israel' programme would be negligible, and tried to deceive Jews abroad about the aggressive character of their programme—and in both cases they failed. Support from Zionism on the part of the four and a half million American Jews, who could at this stage of British-American negotiations be an important political factor, and who, if only in self-defence, have been stirred towards efforts at international Jewish self-help, has become very small. Particularly the young American Jews, strongly turning to radicalism, have been alienated by the chauvinism of Zionist propaganda, the megalomaniac appeals from Palestine to 'the whole Jewish people'

to mobilize behind the Palestine leaders, the transparent attempts to camouflage the real situation, Histadrut policy towards the Arabs, and so on.

An unmodified chauvinist Eretz Israel policy, regarding the substitution of any Arab by a Jew as so much access of strength, is foredoomed to failure. Turning Palestine into a country of perpetual racial strife, it would equally slowly deprive Zionism of any intelligent Jewish support.

In any case, in the new situation in Palestine, there is no more room for it. Can Zionism emerge from the political blind-alley into which it has been led? It is difficult to say, yet in view of the past, the writer feels that under the pressure of historical forces—intensified Jewish persecution, Mediterranean complications around Palestine, the Jews will be able to overcome the present deadlock. As one Zionist official, strongly in favour of Jewish-Arab integration in any ‘Jewish State,’ said to the writer: ‘Historical forces in Palestine and outside, where our own position is that of perpetual minority, would give us no choice.’ And so, if the Partition of Palestine is carried through with reasonable success, several hundred thousand Jews may be ‘salvaged’ from Germany and Eastern Europe. What would this mean? It would mean that while in Europe the Jews would be crushed, would slowly vanish, a small ‘Jewish State’ of three-quarters of a million, perhaps a million, or a million and a half Jews, would arise for a while in the coastal sector of Palestine, as a predominantly Jewish State side by side with predominantly Arab States. It would be a strange state, at once of the Levant and essentially of Europe . . . Oriental Jews and Arabs moving side by side with Polish Jews, among white cubicle houses put up by German-Jewish architects . . . class and national conflicts fought at fever heat as in Spain. For how long would this Jewish State exist? Are Jewish hopes in Palestine, in the long, long run, irrational? The Jews of Vienna, faced by utterly irrational doom, do not ask this question?

And, weighing Jewish strength and determination in

Palestine, and the probable persistence of Jewish persecution in the outside world, the writer feels that the Jewish effort in Palestine will not only persist, too, but inevitably increase.

And, at the same time, this whole development in Palestine is dependent upon the turn of the international situation, and who can foresee anything in the present chaos? And this brings one from the narrow stage of Palestine to the present larger problem of the Jews in general.



## CHAPTER XXVI

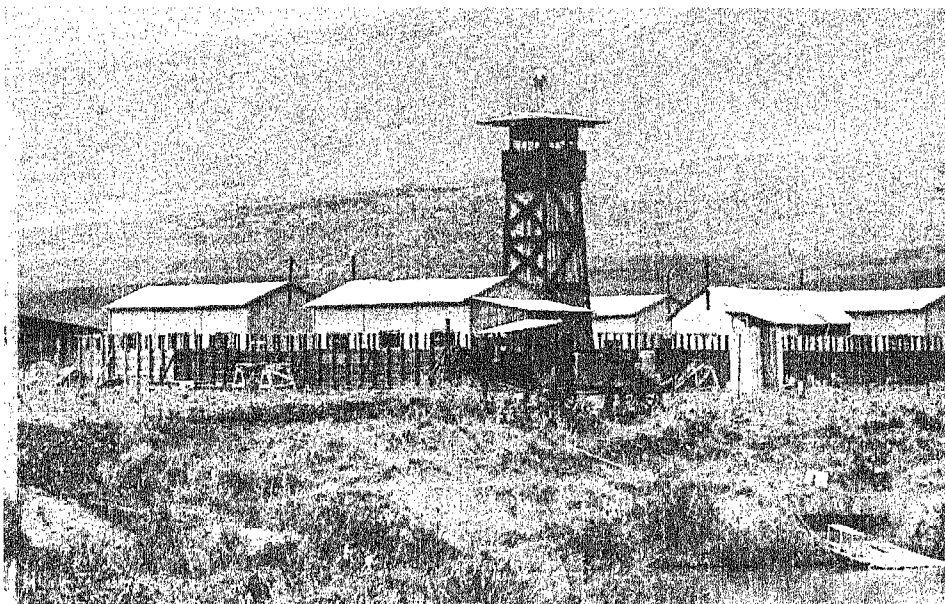
### DARK AGES

‘**T**HE contemporary world,’ said John Strachey in a recent book,<sup>1</sup> ‘is in a bloody flux. Nothing in it remains stable, fixed, or safe. Alike in the sphere of moral values, beliefs, and ideas, and in the material sphere of kingdoms, empires, states, and principalities, “the eternal altars tilt and tumble.” Men have few remaining unshaken beliefs, loyalties, or traditional principles upon which to base their actions and their lives. In periods such as this, social regression is only too likely to occur.’

In periods such as this, too, it is fatal to be weak, and weakness is the present fatal misfortune of the Jews. The success of individual Jews should not disguise this weakness. Jewish individuals or small groups have here and there been able to penetrate into the ruling class, but in the mass the Jews, everywhere in a minority, are even more defenceless than the Basques, the Spaniards, the Abyssinians, the Chinese. Hence, in a period of chaos and robbery, the present onslaught upon them.

It is a strange coincidence that this period of greatest Jewish persecution should set in when the Jews had reached their greatest numbers in history—or perhaps not quite so strange. Numbers affect the Jewish problem in a peculiar manner. To other nations, in the ordinary way, increase in numbers means access of strength, to the Jews, always in a minority, it often means only greater danger. The

<sup>1</sup> *What Shall We Do*, Left Book Club choice for April 1938, where, significantly, Stalin’s name is only mentioned twice in unimportant generalizations.



*Above: Jewish Frontier Settlement*

PLATE VIII

*Below: Jewish Farming, 1938*

[Facing page 338]



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Jews could to-day form a nation of respectable size. During the nineteenth century the educated urban Jews of Europe and America, with their exceptionally low average death rate, increased at a prodigious rate. They did not flood the civilized world, as their Nazi detractors allege, but they reached a total of sixteen million and formed a considerable proportion of the population of the world's great cities, ranging from 3 per cent in London and Paris, 10 per cent in Chicago and Vienna, to 25 per cent in New York, and 30 per cent in Warsaw. Jewish increase was swift, but in recent years, as the Jews have everywhere become concentrated in the middle class, this population movement has become equally sharply reversed, and the Jews are both absolutely and relatively declining. Had this decline set in thirty or forty years ago, there would be no significant Jewish problem in the world to-day. Equally, if things could go their way, in forty or fifty years time the Jewish problem would be numerically insignificant. Small Jewish communities would undoubtedly disappear through assimilation. The Jews as a separate unit are an anachronism, anyway. But this is little consolation to the Jews to-day.

The sixteen million Jews of to-day fall into two distinct groups: three million Jews in the Soviet Union, and thirteen million scattered through the capitalist world.

The Soviet Jews need hardly be counted as Jews any longer. The twenty years' gap between them and the outside world has had its effect. Had the late Marshal Tukhachevsky proved victorious at the decisive battle of Warsaw in 1920 and regained Poland and Bessarabia with their four million Jews for the Soviet Union, Palestine might have been partially adequate for Zionist immigration. Actually, the very early history of the Jews in the Soviet Union forms a dark chapter. Crowded into provinces devastated by civil war, the petty *bourgeois* Russian Jews were at once given their formal freedom, and largely declassed. For years it was only large-scale American-Jewish relief funds which kept many of them alive. But

this is now past. The Five Year Plan, with its demand for a gigantic administrative machine, opened illimitable opportunities for the younger Jews. During recent years nearly a million Jews have flooded into the chief Soviet cities and industrial centres (including 400,000 into Moscow, where Jews were forbidden to live under the Tsars), a Jewish migration comparable only to that earlier rush which brought millions of Jews into the eastern cities of the U.S.A. thirty and forty years ago, but with this difference, that the American Jews continued to form a distinct social and racial unit, whereas the Soviet Jews form a rapidly dissolving unit. In spite of foreign communist propaganda about a flourishing Yiddish culture in the U.S.S.R., it is plain that, given a chance of freedom, the young Soviet Jews have shown themselves even more eager than young American Jews to shed the repressions of their Jewish past. Change-over from Yiddish to Russian, Jewish intermarriage and complete assimilation, are proceeding at an unprecedented rate, and in little more than one or two generations the Jews in the Soviet Union, whatever their fate as individuals or members of other groups, will at any rate no longer exist as a national unit—largely by their own choice.

This leaves about thirteen million Jews, scattered through the rest of the world. Of these, roughly six million live in Central and Eastern Europe—rather more than half a million still under the Nazis, and three and a half million in Poland. Almost the same number, six million, live in the 'democratic countries'; four and a half million of these in the U.S.A., including over two million in New York, and about one and a half million spread over Western Europe, the British Empire, and South America. There are also about a million Jews in Africa and the Near East, nearly half of them in the new community in Palestine.

There is no need to say anything further about the fate of the German and Austrian Jews, already so familiar that it is no longer news value, indeed, almost taken for granted by public opinion. But economically the plight of the Polish and Roumanian Jews is actually worse. The German Jews,

if not the Austrians, were relatively few and relatively well off. They included numbers of skilled technicians, and many of them have been helped to emigrate. It speaks a great deal for German discipline that, in spite of continuous exhortation to this effect from official newspapers, only a single pogrom has taken place in Germany. The four to five million Polish and Roumanian Jews have no such physical security, nor any real chance of migration. Until fifty years ago, under the East European feudal regimes, they formed the small commercial middle class of these countries. To-day, during the chaotic phase of capitalist transformation, they are slowly being expelled as a foreign body. Under semi-fascist governments, state-aided processes of 'Polonization' or 'Roumania for the Roumanians' are in full swing. If the piecemeal elimination of the Jews from one economic position after the other is slow, particularly owing to the superior skill and desperate efforts of the Jews, it is thorough, and with every year the Jews are sinking further into a state of overcrowding, unemployment, pauperization—and hopelessness. If this slow grinding process of plundering and expelling the Jews is continued long enough, the Polish and Roumanian Jews will in the end be slowly starved out, lingering in miserable poverty, dwindling again to small, wretched Ghetto communities—slow death by starvation instead of swift death and massacre from the air which has descended on other small weak nations, on Basques, Asturians, Abyssinians.

At first sight there seems little connection between these unfortunate poverty-stricken Jews in poverty-stricken Eastern Europe and the comparatively wealthy and secure Jews in countries such as Britain or the United States. Yet, within the general capitalist crisis which is threatening the entire fabric of Western civilization, a specific danger threatening all Jews has suddenly arisen. It is this, that in the last stage of crisis, the finance-capitalist ruling class in every country *must* make every effort to save itself—at all costs. The present pattern is that of drowning revolutionary discontent by arousing violent nationalist move-

ments, and the most effective scapegoats for such nationalist movements are—the Jews. Everywhere traditional anti-Jewish antagonisms provide a ready starting-point. Hitler and his followers have shown how easily a party can be raised on tribal and anti-Jewish slogans and the prospect of plundering, expelling, and taking the place of the Jewish minority. What capitalist ruling class can afford not to have recourse to such strategy during extreme crisis? The helplessness of the Jews is the greatest incentive. Crowded everywhere into a few big cities and a narrow range of professions, without decisive influence upon government, even the strongest Jewish communities are ultimately defenceless. It is in general not the ruling classes who are anti-Semitic, but to save itself every ruling class would be prepared to throw the Jews, even Jewish capitalists, to the mob. After Hitler's rise there can be no security for any Jewish minority. The British upper class of to-day, for instance, is still broad-minded and tolerant towards British Jews. Although Jews are to-day already suffering growing exclusion from certain spheres—employment by big trusts, the public schools, medical schools—many professions are still open, and individual Jews are still allowed to rise to the highest positions and honours in the State; a Jew was Viceroy of India (though such an appointment would be unlikely to-day), a Jew is to-day British Minister for War. No anti-Semitic fascist movement is needed to regiment the British masses. And yet, both Jews and non-Jews are nervous about the Jewish question in Britain. Atavistic hatreds can be roused in the British mob mind as in any other mob mind. When the next slump comes, bringing rising prices, rising unemployment, anger, and despair, with Hitler's bombing planes waiting on the Rhine, tolerance will be a rare commodity! It would be hysterical to imagine (as some hysterical Jews have already imagined!) that Streicher's articles would ever be printed in *The Times*. But another version of official 'non-intervention', if the Jewish issue becomes critical, is perfectly imaginable. It may not happen, but it could, and

in that case the memory of the great services rendered to Britain by British Jews from Disraeli to Hore-Belisha, and the high regard in which so many leading British Jews are held, could vanish overnight. What country had derived greater benefits from its Jewish citizens than Germany? A leading non-Jewish scientist has written :

‘ A Nazi who has venereal disease must not allow himself to be cured by Salvarsan, because it is the discovery of the Jew, Ehrlich. He must not even take steps to find out whether he has this ugly disease, because the Wassermann reaction which is used for the purpose is the discovery of a Jew. A Nazi who has heart disease must not use digitalin, the medical use of which was discovered by the Jew, Ludwig Traube. If he has toothache he will not use cocaine, or he will be benefiting by the work of a Jew, Carl Koller. Typhoid must not be treated, or he will benefit by the discoveries of the Jews Vidal and Weil. If he has diabetes he must not use insulin, because its invention was made possible by the research work of the Jew, Minkowsky. If he has a headache he must shun pyramudon and antipyrin (Spiro and Edolge). Anti-Semites who have convulsions must put up with them, for it was a Jew, Oscar Leibreich, who thought of chloral-hydrate. The same with psychic ailments: Freud is the father of psycho-analysis. Anti-Semitic doctors must jettison all discoveries and improvements by the Nobel Prize men, Politzer, Baranji, Otto Warburg; the dermatologists, Jadassohn, Bruno Bloch, Unna; the neurologists, Mendel, Oppenheim, Kronecker, Benedict; the lung specialist, Fraenkel; the surgeon, Israel; the anatomist, Henle; and others.’<sup>1</sup>

What effect can intellectual arguments have against a movement priding itself on blind hatred and anti-intellectualism? Are we to-day, in the early twentieth century, upon the threshold of new Dark Ages? In Germany, in Austria, in Poland, the example of anti-Jewish persecution has been given. Anti-reason is triumphant. In the Jewish cemetery in Vienna, in this bloody spring of 1938, a whole age of European cultural tolerance has been buried. The significance of this must on no account be underrated.

<sup>1</sup> D. Lukatchevsky, quoted by Roth in *Jewish Contributions to Civilization*, p. 215.



Bad government drives out good, not only in its own country but in neighbouring states. The disease spreads swiftly. *Intellectual sanity, as much as political peace, is, in the present-day world, indivisible.* The sadistic persecution of the Jews in Vienna has given a lead, both to Jews and non-Jews. Nothing will be the same any more. One of the oldest, most deep-rooted, violent, and distorted hatreds has been let loose, given the freedom of the world. From the psychological point of view this has been something worse than war. In a country which only a short while before was civilized it has been possible to have a racial or religious minority declared beyond the law, free game for the mob, without civic or police protection, to be plundered, tortured, murdered without much consequence. Poor Jews picked at random from the street, as much as the most distinguished Jewish scholars and scientists, could be forced to scrub pavements, subjected to humiliating and degrading tortures till hounded to suicide. And on the Jewish side there was only the helplessness of the unarmed. Not one blow was struck in return, not because the Jews were cowardly, but because the first counter-blow would have let loose a complete Jewish massacre. After this, how can the Jews feel safe in any country in which anti-Jewish prejudice exists? For all Jews the question has arisen: can they be *sure* they will escape, in Britain, under British tolerance; in France, under a Left Government; in the United States, where they are still free; in New York, where they are two million strong? The fear cuts across classes and incomes, across all other issues, across daily life; the antagonism which has been aroused is too old, too irrational, too deeply ingrained both in the Jewish and non-Jewish mind. Not that the Jews lack courage. On the contrary, given the least opportunity, they can fight with the best. In Palestine, in the ranks of the International Brigade in Spain, in every revolutionary movement of the last hundred years, they have done enough to prove their fanatical bravery. They can struggle against every enemy except one—anti-Semitism. Here they are

paralysed, because their economic and political position provides no security and because the enemy they face is intangible. They cannot even fall back on their Jewishness, because they have long lost it. Jews facing anti-Semitism are fighting the worst of all struggles—*with their backs to nothing*. No wonder that an acute sense of defeatism is invading the Jewish mind, so that a distinguished Jewish historian at a British university could write as early as 1935 :

‘ But the question which the Jews must now ask themselves is whether they can, and should, assume the responsibility for bringing Jewish children into the world in the Galuth, to face a fate which seems to become worse every year. It is admitted that parents should not have children for whom they cannot provide economically ; but is not the moral basis of existence at least equally important ?

‘ The first reaction of some Jews to this contention is that we are a valuable element and ought not to die out, not even in the Diaspora. Valuable—to whom ? And if it is so, who will lose by our dying out ? Not we ourselves. There is no loss in non-existence. And the world ? Looking back at our history of the last two thousand years we may perhaps be excused for not worrying as to whether the world will lose or gain by our disappearance.<sup>1</sup>

And, in fact, in Western Europe, wherever the Jews have assimilated and mingled with their surroundings, the Jewish birth-rate has already fallen so low that Jewish numbers are steadily decreasing—as a separate people the Jews have begun to vanish.<sup>2</sup>

But this is a slow process of two generations. Academic intellectuals may find comfort in resignation, but the masses, the millions of ordinary Jews, want only too desperately to live. It is these Jewish masses who in the last forty or fifty years have felt themselves in a trap slowly closing in upon them. In every country they are to an

<sup>1</sup>D. Namier's Introduction to *The Jews in the Modern World*, by A. Ruppin.

<sup>2</sup> The Jews themselves are on the way to solving the Jewish problem. Where they live in compact masses in backward states, e.g. in Poland, in the New York East Side, they still have a natural increase. But statistics show in every single case that the natural increase among

increasing extent in the position of foreigners. Migration from country to country only transfers the Jewish problem, and at best only postpones it for a while. The great majority of the Jews may still be working at their jobs and may still own considerable possessions, and yet their sphere is steadily narrowing, and ultimately, it seems to many Jews, there is no room for them, whether they are poor Jews in the slums, efficient business men, or the most distinguished professional or scientific workers.

Psychologically this slow exclusion of the Jews differs from ordinary capitalist unemployment, because of its awful lack of reprieve. In the last few years country after country has closed its gates against immigration. For expelled Jews, it seems, there is no room in this world. Of course, more accurately put, there is no room within a monopoly capitalist system. So many countries in the present world are still large and bountiful, and almost uninhabited. Only the vicious finance-capitalist system bars the way, so that Western Canada and Sicily can have

the Jews is smaller than among the non-Jews. Here are the figures given by Dr. A. Ruppin in *The Jews in the Modern World*, p. 101.

EXCESS OF BIRTHS OVER DEATHS  
(Increase or Decrease per 1000)

<i>Country or City</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Jews</i>	<i>Non-Jews</i>
Soviet Union . . .	1926	+ 15.5	+ 25.1
Bulgaria . . . .	1925-28	+ 11.1	+ 16.5
Poland . . . . .	1929	+ 9.7	+ 13.4
Romania . . . . .	1930	+ 5.7	+ 15.6
Lithuania . . . .	1930	+ 4.5	+ 11.0
Italy . . . . .	1925-30	— 0.4	+ 10.1
Hungary . . . . .	1929	- 1.7	+ 7.9
Prussia . . . . .	1929	— 6.3	+ 6.3
Bohemia . . . . .	1929	— 6.4	+ 2.1
Vienna . . . . .	1929	— 6.7	— 5.0
Berlin . . . . .	1929	— 7.6	— 2.4

One can see this wave of 'dying out' spreading from West to East across European Jewry; even where the Jews are increasing they are relatively falling behind, and one can be sure that recent figures will be far more unfavourable to the Jews. In fact, the Jews had anticipated Hitler; for a decade the Jewish birthrate in Germany and Austria had been insignificant, and the German and Austrian Jews were fast vanishing.

the same population, their unemployed, and no further room for immigration. But for the Jews, enclosed in this capitalist world (the Soviet border is hermetically closed), the distinction has no real existence.

And so, with this apparently world-wide pressure, exaggerated by mob hatreds, slowly closing in upon them, it was no wonder that many Jews, not only Jewish refugees and unemployed, but even well-established Jewish business or professional men, saw the only way out from the trap in a flight from reality—into a dim past, into a Palestine which was a mystical Eretz Israel, Land of the Jews.

Here we have the source of mystical Zionism : a religious revivalism among an ancient people, an irrational answer as the only one possible in an irrational situation. It is an answer borne out of primitive Jewish history ; faced with inevitable doom, only a regression to a dim past can bring safety. From this source, too, derives the irrationality of Zionist dreams, which essentially did not deal with the immigration of so-and-so many hundred thousand Jews into the small country of Palestine, but had to aim at nothing less than the solution of the whole Jewish problem. Within this framework, too, one can understand all the grotesque exaggerations of Zionism, the strange messianic claims of the Palestine Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, who, whatever their following happens to be, issue commands from their Jerusalem office to ' the whole Jewish people, acting as though all the millions of Jews, not only in Vienna and Warsaw, but in London, Paris, Brighton, New York, Hollywood, Chicago, Moscow, were only waiting to follow their lead, enrol under the Zionist flag in the struggle for Palestine and against the Arabs. . . . From this angle the blind inability of the Zionists to accept the reality of Palestine Arab nationalism also becomes intelligible. But because the irrational collapse of Jewish existence in Europe has assumed such catastrophic dimensions, the irrational answer represented by Zionism has been pursued with such fanatical intensity that in Palestine, at least, reality has been changed,

and the immigration of a solid block of hundreds of thousands of Jews has created a new concrete situation, even a new political factor in British imperial policy and in the eastern Mediterranean.

So much for the Jewish minority struggling under Zionist inspiration for a foothold in Palestine. But the great majority of the European Jews, unable to migrate to Palestine or anywhere else, must remain—to face their fate in a nationalist-fascist Europe.

What can still be said about their immediate fate? To-day the ‘insoluble Jewish question’ extends right across Europe: millionaire Jews swept from their Viennese palaces into street-cleaning squads fill newspaper headlines; international moneyed Jews, moving from Central Europe, fill the foyers of luxury hotels in the Western countries; some thousands of prominent German and Austrian Jewish doctors, chemists, biologists, journalists, stage and film actors and producers, have within the last year or two poured into London, Paris, New York, Hollywood, quickly falling on their feet, bringing their cosmopolitan atmosphere with them, starting off new eddies of jealous anti-Semitism. . . . But these few thousand are only the prominent, the successful, those in the news: beyond these exceptions lies the dull tragedy of millions of Jews, of a destroyed Jewish middle class and pauperized Jewish shun-dwellers progressively expelled from their European surroundings. In fact, what is clear to-day is that for Europe the Jewish problem is inseparably bound up with every vital political issue of the day; for the Jews it remains their own problem—unique and catastrophic.

The connection is tragic in its misunderstandings. For the second time in the history of Europe the people of Europe have lent themselves to an orgy of anti-Semitism, to their own detriment. The mobs of anti-Jewish rioters of the Middle Ages—what were they? Incited peasants and town-poor, tools of their masters; they destroyed the financial power of the Jews, only to set up the rule of that

European nobility and Christian banking class which for centuries ruled and exploited the countries of Europe.

To-day, letting themselves be tricked and side-tracked into frenzies of anti-Jewish hatred, the people of Central Europe, the masses of men and women in the street, have let themselves again be robbed of their liberty and swept into the armies of the new totalitarian slave-states which are heading towards—what?

The anti-Semitic tragedy is a tragedy for all Europe. Intellectual sanity is to-day as indivisible as peace. Only to-day, after five years, has Europe realized that behind the successful smoke-screen of anti-Jewish propaganda an absolute German militarism has been re-created, whose air and sea attacks upon Spanish towns are only a foretaste of what is to come. But for the Jews their persecution is their own unique problem. What can they do? Under present conditions hope of freedom lies only on the Left, beyond revolutionary risings. The French Revolution had first given the Jews legal and civic emancipation, and after the Russian Revolution the Jews in the new Soviet State were for the first time freed from *every* social discrimination. Naturally, revolutionary communism, particularly in its most extreme and abstract form, promising an ideal classless and nationless society, has always exerted an intense attraction upon the Jewish mind. Yet even Jewish communists, as far as they are honest, can to-day see no straight road before them.

During the post-war years, where the Jewish problem was concerned, orthodox communists made things rather easy for themselves. They simply denied the existence of a special Jewish problem. Anti-Semitism was only a trick to confuse the clear issue of the class struggle. Zionism was only a further imperialist trick to deceive the Jewish masses and enslave the Palestine Arabs, and as such fought by international communists with such bitterness and reckless recourse to slander that their attacks were often indistinguishable from those of the Nazis. Thirdly, for the sake of Jewish nationalism, the Soviet rulers' promise of a

Jewish communist republic in Birobijan in Far Eastern Siberia was hailed as offering a true solution for the narrower Jewish problem—if it existed.

At the first test of reality these theories have broken down. The adherence of many hundred thousand Jews to Zionism, and a Jewish or partly Jewish Palestine, is a fact, and not even extreme communists can still decry Zionism as a mere imperialist trick or describe Viennese Jewish refugees escaping to Tel Aviv as a 'spearhead of imperialism'; in fact, communist abuse of Jewish Palestine, formerly shrill and hysterical, has recently become very half-hearted.

On the other side the unfounded hopes placed in Birobijan, that strange communist Zion upon the far-off Amur River, have receded into remote distance. In spite of high-sounding declarations on their part, the Soviet rulers have never shown themselves really interested. After more than ten years propaganda, only a few thousand Jews (and only a few hundred from abroad among them) have been settled, and recently, under the new orientation, the chief Jewish organizers of the scheme have been arrested as Jewish chauvinists and wreckers. Early in 1938 Troyanovsky, Soviet Ambassador at Washington, had to inform assembled American-Jewish communists that foreign Jewish migration to Birobijan was for the time being out of the question, because the local Jews had already proved infected by counter-revolutionary tendencies, engaging in Zionist and pro-Japanese spying. *Autres temps, autres mœurs!* In Tsarist days it was on account of alleged pro-German spying that Russian generals ordered mass Jewish expulsions. Who knows what the future may bring; under a changed regime in Moscow, permitted to be less militarist and pathologically suspicious, Jewish migration schemes into undeveloped areas in the Soviet Union might yet be possible. But, at present, communist Jewish hopes in Birobijan have been sharply liquidated.

Under such changed conditions there might be no need for Jewish migration, but one can no longer be sure of

thus. Economic and emotional nationalism is still swiftly growing in Europe. The main communist theory of the Jewish problem as a mere symptom of the class struggle, which would vanish as soon as a more democratic economic order were established, can no longer be taken for granted. That Jewish assimilation was under special conditions successfully accomplished after the Russian Revolution within the vast bounds of the Soviet Union can no longer be taken as a universal guide, particularly in the case of smaller, crowded countries. The new wave of nationalism which has swept Europe and even the Soviet Union (incidentally leading to the almost complete elimination of the older Jewish intellectuals and revolutionaries) has entirely changed the emphasis of the political struggle. The highly emotional and highly organized national movements of to-day, with every cunning device of modern scientific propaganda behind them, cannot be compared with the primitive peasant anti-Semitism of 1918, which the Soviet revolutionary leaders had to overcome. Take Poland, for instance, where the Polish feudal and capitalist ruling class has for twenty years been holding down an impoverished people by clever manipulation of an anti-Jewish nationalist party, and where the Jewish minority, once half the Polish middle class, is being pushed from one economic position after another. Why should this process not be continued for the next five, ten, twenty years?

The people least able to struggle against it are the Polish Jews. In a country like Poland, whose peasant population has for twenty years been affected by systematic anti-Jewish propaganda, nothing could so handicap a Polish revolutionary party as the adherence of hundreds of thousands of unemployed and declassed urban Jews—who would so willingly join to struggle against their persecutors, if only they could!

This, in fact, is the most tragic aspect of the Jewish question to-day: that, more than any other people, Jews are aware of the baneful oppression and trickery of the class struggle, and less than any other (the reference



here is not to isolated Jewish individuals, but to Jews *en masse*) are they able to throw themselves into the revolutionary struggle for freedom, once political anti-Semitism has been aroused, because the most idealist political party can be killed by being dubbed Jewish, and because a Jewish revolutionary may to-day bring general massacre upon a whole Jewish community. In Vienna, during the hysterical orgy of 'German-worship' on the day of Hitler's triumphant arrival, swastika flags hung from the windows of the socialist workers' stronghold, the Karl Marx Hof. Granted that they might be meaningless, that the workers were only lying low, biding their time—the Vienna Jews were immediately in quite a different position and without hope of rising again.

The uncontrollable and irrational forces of modern history are to-day moving so fast that one can hardly keep pace with them. Only a few weeks before Hitler's descent upon Austria the most clear-headed English writer on Germany, engaged only in tearing every camouflage from the Nazi menace, could let himself be deceived by a momentary lull and a few Jewish shop-fronts left in Berlin into writing: 'The profits of the armaments race will go largely to the Jews' or 'The Jews . . . As I sit writing in Vienna they are all about me, watching with non-committal, veiled appraising eyes the comedy that is going on in *Insanity Fair*. They know that when Hitlerism has passed away they will still be trading in the Kaerntnerstrasse. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

In the course of the year 1937, among the Jewish community of Hamburg, numbering some 15,000, there were four births.

In Vienna, in May 1938, of a Jewish community numbering about 180,000, 80,000, or nearly half, were *totally* dependent upon relief.

It is hard to keep pace, particularly for Jews. As military preparations for the great holocaust mount, Jews in greater and greater numbers are deprived overnight of all livelihood,

<sup>1</sup> *Insanity Fair*, by Douglas Reed, p. 208.

swelling the growing stream of homeless European refugees, accumulating side by side with non-Jews in the concentration camps.

What of the future? If there is a special Jewish intellectual quality, born out of Jewish rootlessness, perhaps it is that of detached, uncompromising, analytical thought. Those Jews who can should make use of this quality—the world needs it. That is, those Jews who through accident of birth and country still possess some opportunity of thought, action, and influence.

But for the great majority of Jews, whether in Poland or in Palestine, there is little chance of active struggle. Their fate, too, will be decided within the major issue—whether European civilization is to survive or to end in chaos. When did we become aware of this inevitable issue? The Jews, perhaps, were only precocious. Forty years ago, startled by the Dreyfus trial, that first sign of the break-up of rationality, the first Zionists tried to arouse the Jews into escape. Five years ago, startled out of their security, the German Jews suddenly began frantically to run. A year ago, after the black day of German aeroplanes over Guernica, the citizens of London began to dig in their cellars for shelter. And to-day the question of the Jews of Europe has become one which must be solved together with all others—or, together with them, fail to be solved.

Not only peace, but intellectual sanity, has become indivisible.



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